

DISCOURSES

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS.

BY THE LATE REVEREND DR. WEEDON:

PUBLISHED for the BENEFIT of his WIDOW.

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DISCOURSES

ON THE VIRTUES OF



SUBJECT

By the late Reverend Dr. WILKINSON

Published for the Benefit of his Widow.

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S E R M O N I.

MATTH. Chap. I. Ver. 21. The latter Part.

—*Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

THIS direction of the Angel to Joseph, is an exprefs declaration of the approach of that fulness of time, and certain appearance of the Messiah, who was promised from the earliest times, and foretold by a long series of prophecies in succession; and in consequence was generally expected by the Jews. The Jews, indeed, from a studied inattention to the several parts, offices, and capacities the Messiah was to bear, misapplied the prophecies and mistook his person. The representations the prophets gave of

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his kingdom, they fondly applied to a temporal instead of a spiritual kingdom, the *kingdom* directly intended. They wanted to shake off the Roman yoke, and impatiently longed for the *advent* of their Messiah, in hopes of a compleat triumph over their enemies. But when, to their surprize and disappointment, they saw a meek and suffering Saviour, they generally despised and almost universally rejected him. For they never once considered the pertinence of those descriptions of the prophet Isaiah to his *humiliation*; but dwelt wholly upon the regal part of his character, and with this delusive imagination looked for a restorer of the *kingdom* to Israel. But Christ's kingdom was evidently a kingdom of a very different nature—a spiritual kingdom founded on the destruction of Satan's dominion, and in the establishment of universal righteousness. It is obviously an empire over the hearts and consciences of men, and no empire of ambition, of tyranny, or slavery, and desolation, but most extensive in its
signal

signal benefits to the whole race of mankind. How very amiable then, and how perfectly attractive is the character of our blessed Saviour, who came in our nature to reconcile God to us, and by his death to put us into a capacity of eternal happiness upon the gracious terms of the gospel? And it is for this reason that the Angel charges Joseph to give him the remarkable significant and expressive name Jesus; &c. What I propose from the text of the present discourse, and what I think can never be unseasonable, is to state and represent, in what sense, and by what methods this Jesus was the Saviour of mankind, who delivered his people from their sins: For this important knowledge will enable us to form a right notion of the true christian faith, and serve to ascertain the terms of our acceptance with him; it will also in the next place direct us to some useful and pertinent observations with respect to our indispensable practice, in consideration of the plain and declared conditions of that

great salvation which was purchased for us by Jesus Christ.

I am first to state and represent in what sense, and by what method Jesus was the Saviour of mankind, who delivered his people from their sins.——The whole œconomy of man's salvation, as described in scripture and purchased by the death of Christ, is an awful display of God's *justice* and hatred against all sin; and at the same time a wonderful manifestation of his *mercy*, in accepting a propitiation for the sins of fallen man, and freely admitting him to the capacity of perfect and eternal happiness, in virtue of that effectual oblation once offered; but still upon certain and express conditions prescribed by our Lord himself. By this provision of *grace*, the utmost discouragement to all wilful transgressions, is exemplified in the method of reconciliation procured by Jesus Christ, and the greatest comfort and most persuasive inducement is hence communicated to encourage a serious repentance, *Secondly*, from an express

express assurance of pardon and forgiveness to every returning penitent; through that propitiation which was made by the death of Christ, for the sins of the whole world. For, as *all* mankind were involved in ruin and misery by the *fall* of our first parents, it is very obvious that God's pardon and reconciliation were first necessary to restore all men to a capacity of salvation.

And is it not full as reasonable that sinners should become qualified to be fit partakers of this salvation? which is a contrivance of God's free grace, made known, and obtained through Jesus Christ, but attainable only, upon a personal reformation and suitable purity of life.

And the question commonly asked, whether God Almighty might not have pardoned sin upon repentance only, is, to speak favorably of it, a manifest indication of an idle and insignificant curiosity; but often favours too much of the pride and spirit of infidelity, and is, indeed, the certain effect of a pert arrogance. For God

undoubtedly may forgive sins upon what terms he pleases: But shall the pardoned sinner presume to dictate and prescribe the manner of his pardon? Every one can't but see that silence and thankfulness is his incumbent duty for the *grant* of so merciful a dispensation. For, as the forgiveness of sin at any rate, is a glorious act of God's free grace; the proper question is not what God might do, but what God in his infinite wisdom has thought fit to do in the present case. This œconomy, if we could give no other reason yet when we consider it, as the particular method God was pleased to take, in order to our reconciliation, and to discover it by a special revelation of his will, should methinks prove abundantly sufficient for our satisfaction in this interesting point. But, it may be added, we can assign very good and satisfactory reasons for the wisdom of this special proceeding. For this peculiar method of our salvation answers the divine purposes better; asserts the authority of God's government, and secures
obedi-

obedience to his laws more effectually than pardon in the way of mere prerogative can do. And thus this divine oeconomy is a publication of God's *justice* and rightedousness, as well as a standing declaration of his grace and mercy to all sinners, and is a becoming vindication of the sanctity and majesty of his venerable laws.

When God's laws were violated and broke, this violation was an indignity, which manifestly required some reparation, in order to rescue *them* from future contempt. The method taken, in order to obtain this necessary end, was an awful expedient, contrived by God, and voluntarily compleated by our blessed Lord. Christ's perfect innocence in our nature was a completion of that entire obedience, which was required of man before the fall; and his *death* was accepted as an expiation for the known breach of the original law, by our first parents. Hence it evidently appears God's laws are not the result of arbitrary will; but are founded upon the fixed and

unchangeable obligations of universal righteousness ; and the majesty of God's government, and vindication of the authority of his laws, rendered some public reparation expedient and necessary. This reparation was wonderfully effected by the meritorious sufferings of Jesus Christ in the human nature.

And now, can any other scheme of the divine forgiveness more adequately answer, or strongly express God's righteous abhorrence and aversion of sin. Consider what was the proper cause of the incarnation of the Son of God, and the real occasion of nailing him to the cross. And the answer to this declaration is the plainest proof of the intrinsic evil and malignity of sin. For no considerate person can ever think sin a trifle, but must conclude the transgression of the law a very grievous offence, when the sin of man was not to be expiated, by any less sacrifice, than that of Christ, the only beloved Son of God.

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But, it is farther remarkable and deserving due notice, that this salvation, by the death of our blessed Saviour, not only declares the heinousness of sin, and God's just indignation against it, but continues a fixed and memorable evidence of his Almighty displeasure: and so answers another valuable and important purpose of our Lord's incarnation. For it is to be remembered, that Christ not only came to save us from punishment, by redeeming us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, but he had a yet more benevolent and gracious design in view, when he bowed the Heavens and came down, and did not scorn the Virgin's womb: For when Jesus Christ came into the world, he came not merely to deliver the sinner from the consequences of the *fall*, but he came *emphatically*, to recover the dignity of fallen man, and to restore human nature to a full capacity of perfection and happiness. He came in the most significant and expressive sense to save and restore all mankind. And here

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it is natural to remark, that God, even in the severity of judgment, signally magnified his mercy, for the free pardon of our sins; by God's acceptance of any satisfaction, justly challenges our utmost gratitude and thankfulness; but to open a new, a more wonderful scene of mercy, to surprize us, with the promise of a triumphant immortality, upon true repentance and amendment of life, by the interposition of our great and appointed Mediator, is, a most unparalleled instance of goodness, and if I may so speak, a *miracle* of mercy. For this reward of our imperfect obedience, is a reward that must exceed our expectations, is a reward that must anticipate our wishes, is a reward that we could not pretend to have merited, had we never sinned at all. And can we forbear, upon a deliberate review of this scene of astonishment breaking out into a holy rapture and extasy of praise? Let us, with the piety and gratitude of the devout psalmist, say, praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me
praise

S E R M O N I. 11

praise his holy name. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.

It is obvyous, from what has been said, that God's goodness and mercy moved and inclined him to forgive mankind: And, we are carefully to observe, that this benefit of pardon and inestimable blessings of *reconciliation*, peace, and eternal redemption, are only bestowed upon us in consideration of the sufferings and atonement made in our behalf, by Jesus Christ, who, by free consent, undertook and effected our salvation, by God's special commission and appointment. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. The salvation of man, therefore properly speaking, is owing to our blessed Saviour, as the author or instrument, but, then he requires the performance of certain express conditions on our part.—These are styled in the Gospel, faith
and

and repentance, which are, *there* required, in plain terms, and accepted by God in virtue of the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

Hence it is evident, *Secondly*, that some qualifications are equally necessary and enjoined to be obtained by all men, to give them a title, not by way of claim or merit, but, as certain conditions to fit them for the glorious privilege of salvation. For, without some conditions required on man's part, where are the reason and use of the the purchase of the pardon of sin by the death of Christ? Was it only to save the sinner from punishment, to procure him an impunity, upon a continuance in sin? There cannot be a more flagrant abuse and fatal misapplication of God's mercy, manifested in the incarnation of Christ, than this dangerous doctrine introduces: For does not this opinion encourage and give a direct sanction to sin? Can there be a more destructive delusion to the souls of men, than this false notion countenances? The

Apostle

Apostle to the Romans in his answer to this monstrous supposition, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Takes the alarm, and in a just indignation of it, cries out with a noble and affecting warmth of zeal, God forbid! For to suppose this permission is to defeat the very intention and end of our blessed Lord's coming into the world.

The incarnation of Christ was certainly never intended only a vindication of God's justice, and a public reparation for the breach of his laws. No, there was a greater, a more glorious design in the scheme of man's salvation. And can God, who is declared, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, ever be imagined to be reconciled to, or admit the sinner to his presence in a state of sinful impenitence? This can never be: For how is this presumption, at all consistent or reconcileable with God's fixed aversion, and known displeasure, against sin, who where disposed and resolved to be merciful to sinners, yet, would not spare his
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own Son, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, and our Father.

There is, then, a most glorious display of mercy, illustrated in the method of this redemption, by our Saviour's becoming man, who came to recover, to restore, to perfect human nature, to exalt lost man to the capacity of eternal salvation. And, in order to free us from the dominion and power of sin; was the Son of God manifested. By which the Apostle evidently means, the Son of God came to kill and destroy all habits of sin and vice. Agreeable to this, St. Paul, in his epistle to Titus, declares the same thing, Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Accordingly, St. Peter tells the Jews, in the third chapter of the Acts, Unto you, first, God having raised up his Son Jesus; sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities. Also, Za-
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charias declares, the intention of our Lord's birth, viz. That, we being delivered from the hands of our enemies, might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteous before him all the days of our life. And was this important design seriously observed, no man could mistake the proper meaning of the word, *Jesus*; nor ever be at a loss to know how, or in what manner, this Jesus is our Saviour, and saves his people from their sins. This doctrine will direct us to some useful and pertinent observations, with respect to our indispensable practice, in consideration of the plain and declared conditions of that great salvation, which was purchased for us, by Jesus Christ.

And, first, I would observe, that the method of our salvation, as an atonement for sin, and as an intention to destroy the power and prevalence of it in the world, is an admirable expedient, calculated with the greatest wisdom, for an effectual check to all manner of vice, and appears a most conducive means to secure the valuable interests

rests of religion, and immediate improvement of real virtue. For the expiation itself, by our Lord's death, is a manifest proof of God's perfect abhorrence, and a declaration of his righteous displeasure to all sin.

This is, I think, a plain evidence, that God can never approve of sin, nor would even admit a sinner to pardon without sufficient satisfaction. And this provision of God's sparing not his own Son, was a method of vindicating and asserting the authority and government of his laws; and no less intended, than expressly declared, as a provision of pardon for the penitent sinners only. For sinners are, by God's grace, restored to a capacity of full and perfect happiness, in consideration of the great sacrifice once offered for the remission of sins, on the condition of sincere repentance, and reformation of life and manners. And the blessings of the new covenant, by *Jesus Christ*, have a manifest tendency, in a right estimate, to prevent all abuse of
God's

God's mercies declared and proposed in the gospel of his dear Son : And these blessings certainly oblige Christians, if the care and concern for the happiness of soul and body can lay an obligation on them, to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. For we undoubtedly ought, in prudence, in reason, and in interest, to take heed that we do not abuse this merciful overture of grace; nor pervert or neglect the express terms of our salvation. For the important assurance of scripture, in case of wilful contempt; or a gross neglect, should ever be strongly impressed on our memories; that there now remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries; and those, who will not obey the truth, as it is in Jesus. And we have abundant reason to conclude from the whole process, that God has exemplarily expressed his justice and hatred against sin, in order to afford us full and ample conviction, that he is a righteous Governor, even in the adopted way and manner of our re-

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conciliation. For, it is remarkable, the gospel every where teaches us, to consider the blood and sacrifice of Christ, as the meritorious cause of pardon; while repentance, and a lively faith, called in scripture, the *obedience of faith*, are required, and made acceptable before God, for the sake and through the peculiar mediation of Jesus Christ. But how does this conspicuous righteousness call upon every Christian to be mindful of God's immutable justice and holiness; even while he experiences the riches of his grace and mercy? This consideration, if we think at all, must prove a demonstration of the folly of persevering in sin; for a wilful course of vice and obstinate impenitence destroy the intention of Christ's incarnation; and defeat the end of his coming into the world; and therefore the due sense of these evils, with their pernicious consequences, should be the greatest discouragement both to the commission of sin, and to a continuance in it. But, I would observe, *secondly*, how perfectly destructive of all religion, and how pernicious, that
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incredible doctrine of a partial and limited salvation by Jesus Christ, which cancels the design, and vacates the great end of the manifestation of the Son of God, to destroy the works of the devil. For when we consider this end, as the fixed and real purpose of his appearance, we can never admit that absurd opinion, that Christ came into the world to save a few, select favourites, only, without respect to a conditional merit, required by the gospel; and what is yet a more shocking consideration, he is, by this supposition, believed to sentence and devote the bulk of mankind, to certain inevitable destruction, without regard to any demerit. And who does not see, that these mistaken notions of Christ's incarnation, dishonour God, and reproach Christ himself, with the infamy of a cruel partiality, in the most merciful of all dispensations, the redemption of man? But our Lord came into the world, as a merciful, generous, and universal Saviour; which is the true and honourable account the

scripture gives; and as such, the declared and known voice of God himself: We therefore, cannot but reject so partial a misapplication, and ignominious perversion of Christ's coming into the world, with a just abhorrence and righteous indignation. But, for full satisfaction in this important point, it may not be improper to urge a few conclusive texts of scripture as unexceptionable evidence of it's truth and certainty, not easily to be evaded. And, you may pertinently observe, that as the fall of the first Adam included all mankind, in it's certain consequences; so the redemption of the second Adam, Christ, for the recovery and restoration of man, must likewise extend to the whole world. And in pursuance of this point, the Apostle to the Romans, represents death, as the certain consequence of Adam's sin, comprizing mankind: For, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men; for that all have sinned. And it is no less remarkable, that St. Paul pursues
this

this analogy in it's full extent, and declares the salvation by Christ, equally comprehensive, including all the world. For as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of *one* shall many be made righteous. And it deserves notice, that the Apostle grounds this assertion, upon the necessity of this analogy between our first parent and our Lord: For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. Several passages of scripture declare the benefit of Christ's appearance, universally extensive, including the whole species of men, as wanting this expiation for their sins; in whom, viz. Christ, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins; according to the riches of his grace. And, not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation;

but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. Christ, is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that, if one died for *All*, then were *all* dead; and he was to be called Jesus; for he was to save his people from their sins. The blessings, therefore, of our Saviour, you may observe from these several texts, was undoubtedly an extensive, an universal blessing to mankind: And in this satisfactory view, all men have certainly the highest reason to join the chorus of the heavenly Host, and say, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.—But in conclusion, I must further notice the opinion, that we are saved by Christ's righteousness; only, imputed to us, without any respect to our conduct, as an opinion full of danger,—pernicious in its immediate tendency, and fatal in the certain event. Christ came, it is true, to save all sinners; but it is no less true,

true, that those only will be intitled to this salvation, who are careful to repent and amend their lives. Personal righteousness, therefore, is evidently required of every Christian, and accepted by God, through the alone merits of Christ, in virtue of that propitiation once made for the sins of the whole world. And, to imagine salvation, secured to us by Christ, without a sincere, though imperfect obedience, is, in fact, a direct contradiction to the uniform tenour of scripture. For this delusive corruption of doctrine, destroys the whole scheme, intention, and end of man's redemption, by the blessed Jesus: and is every way inconsistent with the nature and terms of the gospel salvation. We, therefore, cannot, dare not speak, peace, when there is no peace, to the souls of men, upon such a groundless presumption. You are, therefore, to consider what Christianity is in fact: And the Christian religion lays an indispensable obligation on every one, to an universal purity and holiness of life. St.

Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, declares our holy profession, and says, Let every one, that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. And I pray you, mark the express condition of salvation, purchased by Christ, which is plainly this: that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. And *now*, it may be asked, Whether Christians hope to be saved, while they continue easy in the practice of known sin, from a credulous presumption of the sufficiency of imputed righteousness, without an active faith in Christ Jesus? If there are any so credulous, I would bespeak their attention to our Lord's awful determination of the case of *wicked* Christians, in a future state,--where he pronounces,--that *Tyre* and *Sidon*, *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, places remarkably sinful, shall meet with more favours at the judgment of the Great Day, than vicious Christians. Let me then intreat you, to suffer the word of exhortation, and to remember our Saviour's solemn and affecting declaration, that the bare profession

of

of faith *only*, will never justify this groundless, and presumptuous expectation; but that a good life is absolutely necessary to secure salvation, obtained by the death and mediation of Jesus Christ. For not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in Heaven. And, may the serious consideration of this declarative assurance, make a lasting impression upon all, and have the happy and designed influence on our lives and conversations. And God Almighty confirm the saving effect, and grant that his grace, which appeared unto us, may teach us, effectually to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts; and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom be all Glory and Honour, Power and Majesty, Praise and Dominion, throughout all ages. *Amen.*

*Preached at St. Mary's, in
Oxford, July 4, 1762.*

Oxford, July 4, 1852.

Friend at the College of William and Mary,
 I have just received your letter of the 27th inst.,
 and am glad to hear that you are well and
 prospering. I am also glad to hear that you
 are still a member of the College of William and
 Mary, and that you are still a member of the
 College of William and Mary. I am glad to hear
 that you are still a member of the College of
 William and Mary, and that you are still a
 member of the College of William and Mary.

S E R M O N II.

GALAT. Chap. IV. Ver. 4. Former Part.

But when the fulness of the time was come,

God sent forth his Son.

THE Jewish converts distinguished themselves by a remarkable zeal for the law of Moses, after their conversion, and urged the continuance, and even necessity, of the ceremonial part on the Gentiles, who became Christians. This important point had been before determined by the Apostles at Jerusalem, and the entire freedom of the Gentiles from all obligation to the Jewish rites had been clearly, and authoritatively confirmed by that Apostolical decree. But we find this pernicious doctrine was still propagated,

propagated, and prevailed, by the force of prejudice, in opposition to that ample decision; for the zealots, after the law had almost succeeded in persuading the Galatian Profelytes to renounce the liberty with which Christ had made them free, and tempted those deluded Christians to submit to the yoke of circumcision, and so to stand engaged for the whole entire observance of that burdensome dispensation. But St. Paul, truly sensible of the danger and slavery of this corrupt doctrine, persuaded of its utter inconsistency with the Christian religion, and duly apprehensive of its subversive consequences, maintains, with a noble zeal, directed by knowledge, the perfect freedom of the gospel; and, for the plain conviction of both Jew and Gentile, the Apostle proves the law was only intended, in the original of its design, as an introduction and preparation to bring the Jews to Christ, and which was therefore to cease, when the true intention was once *fully* answered. This state is aptly illustrated by the familiar instance of a young heir, who
continues

continues under the care and direction of guardians and trustees during his minority, till the time limited by the will of his father is come. Even so we, in direct application, when we were children, were in bondage, under the elements of the world. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.

The text, I think, recommends to our notice,

I. The goodness and mercy of God in sending to us at all, which is yet more illustrated in the character and eminence of the Mission: God sent forth his Son. But this mercy and goodness will more signally appear, if we consider, in the next place,

II. The propriety and seasonableness of the particular crisis; for the fitness of the message is evident in the choice of the person, and preference of the most proper season: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son. And this will lead me to conclude,

III. With

III. With some suitable inferences, in confirmation of the truth, to the peculiar advantage and honour of the Christian religion. And, first, the goodness and mercy of God merits our due notice and thankfulness, in sending at all, but especially in sending his Son.

Man, we believe, and are assured by revelation, was created innocent, with a perfection suited to his primitive state and nature. In this state of perfection there was undoubtedly a subordination of faculties, a just balance of the inferior appetites to the direction of the superior powers. In these circumstances, our first parents were capable of continuing in their *innocence*, but, as they were also free, they might forfeit their integrity, from a wilful abuse of that *liberty*. Accordingly, we know God thought fit to make the trial by an awful prohibition, Not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and, in order to secure a dutiful allegiance, there was added an assurance of death upon their disobedience;—In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die!

But

But the event proved, that the declared penalty was ineffectual; for the serpent, by subtle insinuations, beguiled *Eve*, who prevailed with *Adam* to eat of the forbidden fruit, and transgress the positive command of God; and by this transgression sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and, tho' the punishment was not immediately inflicted, yet it was only suspended, and the case of Adam and Eve, after they had both contracted the guilt, may be, in some measure, illustrated by the condition of a criminal, in the interval between his sentence and execution. With this consciousness of guilt, the fearful expectation or apprehension of God's righteous judgment was just and natural; and there could be little reason for them to expect pardon, and much less to hope the recovery of human nature. But forgiveness and reconciliation, upon any terms, must appear, in a due estimate, a singular act of God's great goodness, and an extraordinary manifestation of infinite mercy to fallen man. Accordingly, the parents of mankind were not only

only comforted, before the sentence of mortality was pronounced, with an unexpected mitigation and abatement of the punishment threatened; but they were seasonably encouraged with the enlivening promise of a complete triumph over the great Deceiver, when God vouchsafed to declare, that, the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. And in this most comfortable assurance we are to observe, that God, in the midst, or rather before, judgment, remembered, and signalized, his mercy. From this time commenced the expectation of a *Redeemer*, grounded on that first declaration, which was perpetuated, opened, and increased, by succeeding revelations, at sundry times, and in divers manners, accommodated to the respective ages and states of the world. For God not only revived our first parents with the promise of a Saviour, but continued to exemplify his goodness in the call of Abraham, and in giving the law by Moses, when the Israelites were grown numerous, and become an incorporated people; when he raised up a succession

tion of prophets for their reformation, and preserved and enlivened the general expectation, by circumstantial prophecies of the wonderful conception, and remarkable birth of the Redeemer, with the special designation of the precise time, and particular place of appearance. These gradual interpositions were gracious dispensations of the Divine goodness, and previous introductions to a complete revelation. For the word of prophecy continued sure, and was as a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawned, and the day-star arose. But, because these notices were neglected, and the prophets of these merciful overtures were rejected and destroyed; God last of all determined to send his Son, with the just expectation of a proportionable reverence. For this last mission was the utmost effort of divine love, and a glorious display of infinite mercy, when grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And in this illustrious dispensation was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world; and, agree-

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able

able to this endearing representation, we have St. Paul's assurance, that the good tidings of universal joy were communicated and revealed, by a person of superlative eminence, and unparalleled distinction, for the Apostle observes, and specifies, with a peculiar emphasis, and seeming triumph, that God sent forth *his Son*; which eminence and distinction are, however, remarkably dropped by a late celebrated and admired preacher on this text, as inconsistent with his principles. But St. Paul, who was an inspired Apostle, it is certain, thought the super-eminent character required a peculiar note of distinction, and asserts the dignity of the Son; I may therefore add, as a full confirmation of the above, our Lord's express claim, who particularly declared to the Jews, Before Abraham was, I am; for in this distinguished sense, the Son himself had glory with the Father before the world was. And there is abundant reason for what he asserts, because all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

For

For in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, by whom the worlds were made. And the same, who was in the beginning, is stiled The brightness of God's glory, and the expresse image of his person. Our Lord therefore is much better than the angels, because God has proclaimed him his Son, and commanded all the angels to worship him, in the direct appellation of *God*, when the Apostle ascribes to the Son the most extensive and unlimited dominion with God the Father. But how inconceivably is God's goodness exalted, for the exceeding riches of his grace? and how ought all men to honour the Son as they honour the Father, when they believe the Word was made flesh; when they know this Son bowed the heavens and came down, and, for our salvation, did not scorn the Virgin's womb? And without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh. And this amazing scene continues still to afford abundant matter of joy and astonishing contemplation to the angels

themselves. But God's goodness and mercy are not only evident in the character and eminence of the only begotten Son, but the time of his advent deserves our due notice, and requires a particular consideration, which is the subject of our second enquiry, viz. The propriety and crisis of his appearance.—When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.

When we reflect on the infinite wisdom of the great Governor of the world, there can be no doubt, but that the choice of the instruments, and preference of the most proper season, are constantly observed in all his transactions. But the knowledge of his dispensations must frequently prove an attainment too great for us; because those times and seasons, of future events, which God has put in his own power, are most certainly inscrutable to men. But, when the obscurity of any fact is cleared by the accomplishment, and the certainty authentically confirmed by a concurrence of circumstances, we may see and acknowledge the progress of divine wisdom from the first opening

opening to the perfect consummation by gradual advances, without any imputation of arrogance in the discovery and right sense of so marvellous a loving kindness. And here of the *Son* the expectation was at first raised by the general promise of the seed of the woman, and seems to have been illustrated by the probable institution and acceptance of sacrifices, which derived their virtue and efficacy from the being typical of the great atonement to be once made. This *faith* in God's promise was sufficient in the infancy of the world, and adapted to the first age by the length of men's lives before the flood; and the practice of sacrificing contributed, as a lively memorial to continue the firm persuasion. For while the first parents of mankind were alive, the truth of the promise could immediately be discovered; the origin of sacrifices made known; and the conveyance to the deluge be ascertained without difficulty. But after the flood, when the remembrance of that signal vengeance must make a sensible impression, it is hardly credible there should

be any great danger of apostacy; and we may be sure Noah, who was a preacher of righteousness, would interpose the most seasonable instructions, and urge the most powerful motives to prevent a relapse. And, as there was by the visible marks of that desolation abundant reason to stand in awe and sin not, the grant of animal food was given, murder prohibited by the necessary penalty of death, and they were assured for their comfort and encouragement suitable to the circumstances of the new world, that the waters should not any more cover the earth.

But when the corruptions of idolatry began to appear, the call of Abraham succeeded to give a check to the increase, and to put a stop to the growing evil. For Abraham being the father of the faithful, the promise was in this period appropriated more particularly to him and his family, when he received an assurance, that in his seed all the kindreds of the earth should be blessed. But in process of time his venerable example was forgot, and his instructions
were

were neglected. Therefore, when former revelations failed of success and the danger of a spreading infection became epidemical, there was reason to apprehend, gross darkness was likely to cover the people. God at this juncture interposed and gave a written law for the better security of religion to the people of Israel. And this œconomy is considered and will be always esteemed by the ablest judges, a dispensation worthy of God's seasonable interposition. For the law of Moses proved a fence to the encroachments, when regarded, and the types were the shadows of the good things to come, which answered in the course of Providence his intention, and were made subservient, for the reception of that august dispensation in its proper and appointed season. For St. Paul has confirmed the justice of this representation in declaring the law of Moses, which was to be done away, *glorious*, in its delivery, design, and use. And the Jews had a singular advantage in being guardians of the oracles, and *promise* of God. For their journies, sojournings,

miraculous deliverance, and settlement in the land of Canaan procured them reverence in Ægypt, and with the neighbouring nations; and at the same time had a special tendency to spread the increasing expectation. But I may add, that their success and misfortunes, their prosperity and adversity proved a blessing to the world, and under the direction of the same Providence, conducted to the promotion of the uniform plan. For the victorious reign of David, and the peaceable one of Solomon, whose fame and wisdom were the admiration of that age, and well known even in remote parts of the world, must have raised their credit and reputation to the highest degree of honour; and this renown may be presumed to have excited a spirit of enquiry and curiosity to know the laws and opinions of this celebrated nation in its full glory. Their flourishing state makes this notion sufficiently credible, and very natural. But it is no less certain their captivities upon their decay and ruin, which were deserved punishments, became eventual acts of mer-

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cy to the Gentile world, and would naturally awaken their attention, and engage a deliberate consideration. And to this examination the edicts of Cyrus for their return to Jerusalem, and the confirmation enlarged by the succeeding emperors for their restoration, with the grant of exemptions and immunities by Alexander the Great, occasioned by the inspection of the prophecies, may be deemed very justly a successive means, conducive to propagate the prevailing notion. But the translation of the Bible soon after by the express order of one of the kings, his successor, into Greek, which was the general and polite language of that age, rendered the expectation universal, and concurred fully to establish its certain credit by an easy view and knowledge of the ancient records. For, after this translation, we find two celebrated Roman historians mentioning the expectation as a common opinion, which was entertained and believed without doubt, in all the eastern part of the world. Add to his, as introductory to the completion of that

that excellent plan; the inefficacy of philosophy to reclaim the corruptions of the world after all its improvements, and if you observe Socrates' remarkable hope of the near approach of some divine teacher for a certain guide in matters of religion. And you will hence see the world not only was in expectation, but better prepared by these advances and a consciousness of the visible and great importance. But I may suggest further, that the crisis was in itself the most fit and seasonable, when the world enjoyed a profound peace. For this advantage afforded leisure to consider the merits and credibility of any new scheme; and the extent of the Roman empire opened a free and certain correspondence for the knowledge of facts, and the satisfactory attestation. But, if you still observe, that age or period of time was distinguished for the utmost refinements in politics, for a greater proficiency in learning than all the preceding: eminent for judgment, penetration, sagacity, and an inquisitive spirit of curiosity, this juncture will appear the fittest

fitteſt ſeaſon to examine ſtrictly the pre-
 tenſions, and canvass the credentials of the
 Meſſiah. And what ſtill proves it more ſo,
 perſons were never leſs diſpoſed to receive
 any reformation, with an implicit credulity,
 and an irrational faith. Theſe circum-
 ſtances therefore concur, and amply mani-
 feſt to all candid enquirers and impartial
 lovers of truth, that when the fulneſs of the
 time was come God ſent forth his Son.
 And this concurrence of facts will authorize
 us to conclude.

III. With ſome ſuitable inferences in
 confirmation of the truth, and to the ad-
 vantage and honour of the Chriſtian reli-
 gion.

And a firſt inference may be drawn from
 the very time and manner of the appear-
 ance, in recommendation of the Chriſtian
 cauſe. 2, The preaching of the goſpel was
 begun in the moſt enlightened, inquiſitive
 age, and opened and eſtabliſhed in the moſt
 public and authentic manner. For this
 thing was not done in a corner. This pub-
 lication

lication therefore is, a just presumption, and convincing evidence of its undoubted truth, and it was a challenge and call to the interesting trial and examination of that light, which came into the world. But if we consider the known character of the first preachers, who were before remarkable for their simplicity and want of learning, we shall still infer a greater confirmation of our faith. For the Apostles when filled with the Holy Ghost, began to speak with tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance to the astonishment of all persons present from every nation under heaven, who owned on the spot, We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. This unanimous acknowledgement was an unpremeditated, and I may add, an extorted suffrage to its immediate credit. But Jesus Christ was further approved by God with the public demonstration of miracles, and wonders, and signs. Accordingly the success of the first Sermon was no less than three thousand souls. And as their conversions increased, and the
Apostles

Apostles proceeded in drawing all men to Christ, the Jews' jealousy was alarmed, and they endeavoured to suppress that growing doctrine, which they could neither contradict nor confute—by a strict charge not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. This prohibition was an indirect acknowledgement, that there was no exception to christianity, and was also an additional argument to its advantage. But when even the exercise of rigour and severity of outrage and persecution, death and destruction was exerted to extirpate it, the word of God grew and multiplied. For the restless spirit of desolation spread, and the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds evil affected against the brethren, and the persecution with this false zeal was carried to strange cities. The concurrence then became general; and Jew and Gentile conspired with united efforts to compleat its utter ruin. But these distresses had a quite contrary effect, so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. For it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to confound

found the wife, because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. And thus the kingdoms of this world became the kingdoms of Christ, and the nations were converted, without violence, or force, by the purity and sanctity of the gospel, in opposition to their inveterate vices, and in defiance to the malice and rage of men and devils. And how exceedingly natural is it to infer to the honour of our holy religion, when the preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom that our faith succeeded, triumphant, and stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. For the preaching of the gospel was in demonstration of the spirit, and of power; and Christ is, both to converted Jews and Greeks, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

I will only add, in the conclusion, for our encouragement to the like practice, that, if we are as careful to observe this truth, for this purpose the Son of God was manifested; that he might destroy the works

works of the devil, we should then be equally solicitous to let our conversation be, as becometh the gospel of Christ. And the same exemplariness of life and manners would, it may be justly hoped, with the concurrence of God's grace, recover and evidence the power of our holy religion; and its efficacy would then appear in the conversion of sinners. For when the light of the glorious gospel shines before men we may very reasonably expect the certain saving effect should be glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men. And God of his infinite mercy grant it may have this speedy and universal influence for his Son Jesus Christ's sake.

*Preached at St. Mary's, in
Oxford, October 15, 1758.*

S E R M O N III.

MATTH. Chap. VI. Ver. 33.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.—

IN these words our blessed Lord has directed us in the choice, and regulated the pursuit of our present and future happiness. The kingdom of God and his righteousness are, as they ought, being of the most interesting concern, to have the preference to the things of the world, upon a right estimate of their respective value. And our Lord, who best knew this, re-
E quires

quires us to manifest the wisdom of a sound judgment in giving the preference, where it is indisputably due, upon a competition, *viz.* to objects and things the most durable and lasting. For the things of this world are evidently of a precarious tenure and transient nature in the most desirable circumstance; but the overture of happiness in the world to come, proposed under the kingdom of God and his righteousness, is not only an attainable but an eternal state of happiness: the certainty and security of this complete felicity is therefore a sufficient motive for us to make the wisest choice, even if though there was no promise that the things of the world, that is, the necessities of life, should be added unto us. But these were promised to the Apostles, when the words were immediately addressed to them, and were understood in the strict and literal sense. For they who left all and followed Christ, had this express assurance from him, and could therefore with confidence rely on the care of his protection.—Accordingly we have a remarkable

S E R M O N III. 51

able instance in the wise behaviour of St. Matthew who is known to have renounced a life of ease and affluence, and left a lucrative employment to follow our Lord, in a firm reliance on his providential goodness. But the advice of Christ in the text is applicable to all succeeding Christians in every age, to make the things of the world a pursuit subordinate to their more eligible, and best interest. For a necessary supply of those wants implies the exercise of an honest diligence in the attainment; and the reasonable success—upon a trust in God for his blessings, may be justly expected, if we resolve to be content with that portion, which it shall please God to allot us in the way of righteousness. In this right use and application of the words consists the true wisdom of making God's approbation our first choice: and if this is our constant practice, we may securely rest on his special promise for all the suitable requisites of life. But, as this duty is express'd by the kingdom of God and his righteousness. I shall first explain the import, or meaning

of the words, and assign the reasons for giving them the preference to worldly things.

II. Secondly, I shall recommend the wisdom of this becoming practice from what our Lord thought fit—by striking and familiar instances, to suggest to our notice, in order to prevent too great a solicitude for the things of this world, and which appear evidently confirmed by the example of St. Matthew—as meriting our imitation.

I am, first to explain the import or meaning of the words. The kingdom of God and his righteousness are evidently scripture phrases, and, in order to have a clear notion of the true meaning. We must have recourse to the sacred writings to discover what *idea* these words are intended to convey, as there used, and applied. In scripture we frequently meet with expressions of different mode which seem to mean, and do often signify the same thing. A due consideration of this *remark* with respect to the scope, design, and occasion of such passages, will be of no small use to ascertain the

the true and determinate sense. Accordingly the kingdom of God,—of Christ,—and of Heaven, mentioned in the New Testament, are phrases, different in sound, but in fact synonomous terms, and various methods of expression designed to inculcate one and the same thing.—Of this we shall have no reason to doubt, when we observe this application made by St. Matthew in his gospel, Chap. IV. v. 23. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, that is the Christian religion—which was one part of his office, and design of coming into the world. And our Lord in the same gospel, speaking of that divine power by which he cast out devils, says, in a confutation of the charge of the Pharisees, Math. Chap. XII. v. 28. If I cast out devils by the *Spirit of God*, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. For, if this superiority and dominion are the undoubted effects of God's immediate power; you can't deny that this supremacy affords an evident and sensible conviction, that I

am sent from God for the propagation, and establishment of his true religion. And again, our Saviour says, in this gospel, to his disciples, unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. By the kingdom of heaven is plainly meant, in this text, the same that the kingdom of God is intended to signify in those texts, which I have produced to explain the proper sense of the kingdom of God, or of Christ. For by the kingdom of heaven is intimated the state and condition of the gospel, which was fully explained to the disciples, who were doubtless disposed to receive those good tidings of salvation, as being more disengaged from the power and influence of prejudice. To these texts from St. Matthew, it may not be improper to add the authority of St. *Mark*. Now after that John was cast into prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. By this phrase the doctrine of the gospel is evidently intended, and for the reception of which, John the Baptist had been

been all along employed, to prepare mankind. From these authorities there is sufficient reason to conclude the kingdom of God and of Christ, and the kingdom of Heaven, mean the state and approaching establishment of the Christian religion, which was then gradually opening to the world.—But this notion is by no means inconsistent with that final consummation in bliss, in a future state of glory, by which the kingdom of God is exprest in other parts of scripture. For the gospel, or Christian religion coincides with the idea of that more glorious kingdom in the world to come, as it conducts Christians in the way to life everlasting, and is evidently designed to prepare, and finally instate them by the practice of universal righteousness, in that consummate and endless perfection of happiness. But the words of the text are to be understood of the knowledge and practice of religion from the manner and order of the things recommended to our notice, and from their intrinsic worth and excellency. The best and most durable

objects have in our Lord's, as they ought to have, in our estimate, the precedence. And the necessities and conveniencies of life, as meat, drink and cloathing, are to be esteemed in a due subordination to our most valuable, and permanent interest. For these transitory things are subservient to the support of the exigencies of our present frail state. The exclusion therefore of these objects, while we are in the body, is impossible, for the cravings and wants of human nature prove the reasonableness and manifest the wisdom of a proper attention to these subordinate and necessary things. And the affectation of contempt, or neglect, evidences the folly of enthusiasm: it is in fact a plain contradiction to our Lord's advice, who only requires the reasonable and comparative preference upon every competition—and our Saviour, as he knew their lawfulness and use, has regulated the pursuit of them to their due order and degree, by an express assurance of this additional surplus. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these

these things shall be added unto you. The meaning of the kingdom of God being thus fixed, it may not be improper to explain what we are to understand by his *righteousness*. God's righteousness can never be supposed to mean the particular virtue of *justice*, in opposition to any other virtue, but moral obedience to all the laws of religion, which is no mean attainment in any disciple of Christ, but that progressive improvement which will make us, by a right use of the scriptures—perfect and furnished unto every good work. For in other parts of scripture righteousness frequently implies universal righteousness, or moral obedience. And in proof of this extensive righteousness so eminently required by our Saviour in the text, I need only add what he has declared, without any exception whatever, that we must obey the whole moral law, and perform all the duties of the gospel, if we indeed hope, and expect to be saved. For, I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, which was no more than a precise,

precise, formal observance of rites and ceremonies—ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven. The next inquiry therefore is into the reason, why we are required to give to *them* this due preference.

And it may justly be observed in the common estimate of the sober and judicious part of mankind that every thing is prized in proportion to it's known worth and duration—those things being really most valuable in themselves, and generally reputed so, which are most durable and lasting. Accordingly, things frail, perishing and transient, or of an uncertain tenure, are but little esteemed by wise men upon an estimate with things of greater excellency and duration. For it is perpetuity of enjoyment, which enhances the true value. And this persuasion of the fleeting nature of temporary possessions and enjoyments is an instructive admonition how we ought to proportion our esteem and love for the world and the things of it, which are of
short

short continuance, and which if they do not make themselves wings and fly away, we must shortly leave by the unavoidable laws of our common mortality, and perhaps in the most flourishing, and hopeful condition of prosperity. This uncertainty is an useful instruction to teach us the true wisdom of considering them as the conveniencies and comforts of life, during our abode, as sojourners on earth, and so to be regarded only as necessary accommodations in our passage and pursuit of a better life. For which reason we are cautioned to pass the time of our sojourning *here* in fear and never to over-rate these advantages, or to consider them as the foundation of a fixed and permanent happiness. If we have this just sense of things we shall be careful so to use this world, as never to abuse it, and we may so pass through things temporal, as not finally to fail of things eternal. Such a right estimate will prevent an excessive anxiety after the conveniencies of this life, and will reduce these prudential pursuits to a
consistent

consistent preference of a life of glory and immortality in the world to come. This happy disposition is what the Christian religion plainly requires, and neither allows nor warrants an affectation of indifference or insensibility to the bounties of Providence, when they may be procured with innocence, and enjoyed by God's blessing on an honest industry, without sin. For though it is true that the kingdom of God, or the Christian religion, principally consists in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And he, that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men. We may still act consistently in giving the due preference, if we do not in the mean time forget, that godliness has the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come. His providence gives men all things richly to enjoy. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. And this consideration leads us in the second place to recommend the wisdom and reasonableness of this becoming practice

practice from the example, and conduct of St. Matthew, as deserving our imitation.

But, to obviate all misapprehension, in respect of seeking, first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, it is fit to observe, that what is sometimes, though falsely called a religious life, or a life wholly spent in continued acts of devotion is not there recommended to the practice of Christians. For the station and circumstances of much the greater part of mankind render such a scheme utterly impracticable. And persons of inferior rank and no fortune must earn their bread by their daily labour. Some business or employment necessity will oblige such persons to follow, in order to provide for themselves, their families and dependents. And, if Christians are not placed in a station above want, their indigence will demand with the returns of each day, an attendance on that profession of life, to which they have been bred, for their necessary support. In this situation a provision of meat, drink and cloathing, *i. e.* of necessaries will engross a great part, if not the

the whole, of their time, and so prove an unavoidable avocation, and introduce an absolute incapacity for that rigid observance of the severl acts of prayer, and devotion, which have been prest and inculcated, as the sum and substance of true religion—*by which mistaken* piety many honest well-meaning Christians have been imposed upon, and misled; and instead of relying on Providence for blessings on their diligence and industry, have unwarrantably tempted God by a vain presumption of some special interposition, and have deserted their stations and neglected their proper callings, in which they might have lived a Christian life with ease and comfort here, and with the joyful expectation of certain happiness hereafter: the frequent consequence of such delusion in this life has been poverty, beggary, and the utmost distress—and what is still worse—despair, distraction, and suicide, upon the disappointment of this vain hope. And, I say, how contradictory and irreconcilable these pretences to pure and sound religion are with the command
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of our Lord in the text, and with the injunction of the Apostle,—for every Christian to abide in the state in which he is called. For though devotion and prayer are undoubtedly Christian duties, yet they are to be considered, not as the whole, but a part of duty, and are styled the religion of the *means*: and every good Christian is under indispensable obligation to observe these means, as he has opportunity, and his circumstances will allow. And accordingly they are prescribed, as means only in scripture, necessary indeed, and instrumental to fit us for the discharge of our whole duty. But the Christian religion is of a more comprehensive extent; is a universal and complete system of duties, respecting God and man—and is comprized in this brief summary, to live Godly righteousness, and soberly in this present life. And the necessity of universal obedience to each respective branch of our duty, which is what our Saviour requires, by first seeking the kingdom and his righteousness, is enforced by the awful sanction of rewards and punishments
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of an eternal duration, and with an express promise from our blessed Saviour of a supply of all things needful upon a careful compliance with his command.

I shall therefore proceed to specify the reasons for our encouragement to this practice, and which are assigned by Christ to be a firm trust and confidence in the care of Providence. And the instances our Saviour urges are striking and familiar, as he makes a direct appeal to men's senses; and every one, who has but his common understanding, when his attention is once awakened, must see, and acknowledge the force and evidence of these reasons; for they are, when impartially considered, free from any just exception. And since they are so conclusive, the more abstruse arguments may be very well spared, and we need only take a review of our Lord's reasons for ample satisfaction in this point.

And the first and immediate application which our Lord makes in order to determine a wise preference, may be seen in this appeal--Is not the life more than meat,
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and the body than raiment? If God then by an act of his free bounty first gave you life, you can have little reason to doubt, but that the same Divine goodness will not fail to furnish you with all necessary supplies. For life, it must be owned, is the greater gift, and yet the present frame and constitution of human nature require not only nourishment for the support and preservation; but raiment, for the protection and security of life, meat and drink to support and nourish the body, and cloaths to guard and fence it against heat and cold—the injuries of weather and inclemency of seasons. And therefore, as life is more than meat, and the body than raiment, this appeal amounts to this—that all manner of diffidence with respect to the provisions of life is most unreasonable, and as a full proof that there will be an undoubted supply of these accommodations, because necessary in the present state of mortality. And our Lord for a still more satisfactory conviction of the greater care of Providence

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directs our eyes and thoughts to the provision manifested in the preservation of the fowls of the air and the animal part of the creation, much inferior to man. Behold the fowls of the air ! for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? For the care of the creature is, in fact, an instance of God's concern for man's preservation, as a far nobler and superior being. But, in order to obviate all doubt, our Lord has declared, that the figure, stature, and proportion of our bodies, and providing for them, serve only as marks of distinction between man and man, and that these inferior circumstances are ordered and determined by the constant superintendence of an over-ruling Providence. For which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature ?

And the same appeal is made, by our Lord, in order to prevent and suppress all unnecessary anxiety for cloathing. And why

why take ye thought, says our blessed Saviour, for raiment ? Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.--If God so cloaths the flowers of the field with that incomparable elegance of dress embellished with that inimitable beauty and rich variety of colours, and shall he not much more cloath us ? The inference is certainly just, and conclusive. And yet even these flowers, beautiful as they appear in their proper cloathing are often of a day's continuance if not cropt in the opening bud, and which when arrived at the utmost degree of perfection, seem visibly calculated for the amusement, the pleasure, and delight of mankind. May we not well conclude with our Lord, that God will not fail to cloath man, who was created for much nobler purposes—provided he acts in a manner suitable to his nature, and exerts his honest endeavours ? We may conclude that God will grant this

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reasonable success,—for we have our Saviour's promise, that if we first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and it was with this expectation and firm reliance on the care of Providence that St. Matthew instantly obeyed the call of our Lord ; ~~who~~, when he saw him sitting at the Receipt of Custom, said unto him, *follow me*. And he arose and followed him. Such is the simple, ingenuous, and humble account which St. Matthew gives of his call, and of his ready obedience to Christ. The office he bore was an employment of considerable profit, esteemed honourable by the Romans though odious to the Jews for that rapine and oppression with which it was generally exercised ; and their payment of this tribute by *them* was a grievous mortification, as well as a full proof of the loss of their national freedom, and certain subjection to the Roman empire. But the odium of this office, when transacted by a *Jew*, was held in the highest detestation
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and abhorrence,—for it was regarded, as a formed confederacy with the Romans to fix and perpetuate a national slavery. For the Jews esteemed it unlawful to converse with the Gentiles. This was St. Matthew's station, when he was called to be an Apostle, and we are sure it was a lucrative employment, though with a peculiar modesty he only mentions himself as a man sitting at the Receipt of Custom, and would not seem to boast, or make any *merit* of his obeying this call. But St. Luke has informed us that St. Matthew left all, rose up and followed him. And in doing this it is certain he pursued our Lord's advice, and obeyed his command, in seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And his benevolence and intire complacence in this preference of that choice to the advantages of his profitable employment, are manifested in his subsequent conduct. With this view *Lay*i made Jesus a great feast in his own house :

and there was a great company of publicans, and of others that sat down with them. This entertainment was generously intended to afford that company of publicans and the rest, who appeared to be of the same character, an opportunity of conviction and conversion; that they too, by conversing with our Lord, and seeing the works which he did, might be induced to give the kingdom of God and his righteousness the preference to the gains and interest of the world upon a sober and rational estimate; and it is to be observed, as St. Matthew lived at Capernaum, the scene of many of our Lord's miracles and discourses—these we may presume made a suitable impression on, and prepared him to obey our Saviour's call: his faith, therefore, was no implicit blind faith, but a reasonable assent to the doctrines of soberness and truth, founded upon the evidence of miracles, as a certain proof of our Lord's mission, from God. And we may hence observe that a Christian's faith and conduct

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Is not to be resolved into any irrational impulse or feeling. For a Christian is required to be able and ready to give to every one that asketh a reason of his hope. Nor is his conduct to be less rational and sober. For it is no part of a Christian's duty or religion rashly to run into danger, or to seek persecution, as a meritorious act, when it may be prudently avoided. And we are sure it is founded on an indiscreet false zeal, not to say folly, which God neither requires nor approves, nor will ever accept. And St. Matthew assures us in his gospel, not only of the lawfulness and innocence, but the reasonableness and wisdom of this retreat by a special direction given to the Apostles themselves in the case of persecution. But when they persecute you in the city, flee ye into another. And even under the unavoidable necessity of suffering persecution, the command in the text is an express assurance of the continued care of Providence : and there is, too—an additional confirmation given in the same gos-

pel for the encouragement and consolation of all Christians to follow his example—with the promise of an ample recompence for all losses and sufferings, if not here, yet hereafter. For the reply of our Saviour to St. Peter is applicable to all Christians—That every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake and the gospel, shall receive an hundred fold, in this present time with persecutions, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Such was the memorable conduct of St. Matthew when he became obedient to our Lord's call—who declares on this occasion, he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And his example proves abundantly that there is mercy for the greatest sinners upon obedience to all such overtures, and a consequent reformation of life and manners. His preference manifests that we are, in all necessary competitions, between our duty to God and the
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the world—to leave all, and follow Christ, and so secure his approbation and acceptance. But we may still acquiesce in his providence for a blessing on an honest industry in our several stations and callings. And with this sense of their true and transient nature it is no crime to regard and pursue the accommodations as necessities and conveniencies, but we must remember, not to be over solicitous for the superfluities of life, which it is uncertain whether we may ever attain : and if we should attain them, the anxious thought of keeping them will serve only to destroy the satisfaction of what we do, or may enjoy. The best and shortest method to procure content, peace, and happiness in both worlds, is, first to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness : and we may then rely upon the sure promise of our blessed Saviour, that all these things shall be added unto us:

*Preached at St. Mary's, in
Oxford, September 21, 1758.*

the world is generally, and follows Christ
 and to receive his grace, and to be
 acquainted, that we in this world are
 the province of a blessing, for in his
 will industry in our several stations and
 calling. And with the knowledge of this
 and the best nature it is a crime to regard
 and pursue the amount of business needs
 not and consequently, but we must be
 members, not to be over-looked for the
 opportunities of life, which is in our hands
 whether we may ever attain; and if we
 should attain them, the anxious thought of
 keeping them will force us to believe the
 satisfaction of what we do, or may do, in
 this life, and should be used to pursue
 content, peace, and happiness in both
 worlds, is first to seek the kingdom of
 God and his righteousness, and we may
 then rely upon the true promise of our
 blessed Father, that all these things shall
 be added unto us, and we shall not lack
 any thing. (Matthew 6: 33)

SERMON IV.

EPHES. Chap. IV. Part of the Tenth Verse.

When He ascended up on high, He led Captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

THE words of the text are a plain application of an eminent prophecy contained in the sixty-eighth psalm, and which received a signal and ultimate completion by the glorious ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. Thus remarkable is the ascent there foretold and appropriated by the great and inspired Apostle St. Paul. Accordingly we know this to be an article

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of the Christian faith, and as such is inserted in the Apostle's creed. The Psalmist appears to have spoken directly of some great and triumphant conquest, gained by the people of God over their enemies, and while he was celebrating this earthly success, like the monarchs and conquerors of the world in the descriptive pageantry of triumphs after victory, he became seized with the spirit of prophecy. Under the influence of this infallible guide, the Psalmist foretels the future exaltation and conquest of the *Messiah*, and with the foresight of that marvellous event, whose benefit and advantage was to be extended in its effects to mankind; that prophet proclaims his more majestic ascent and supreme triumph: for when the Messiah or Christ ascended up on high, he led Captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And how mean and insignificant are the ostentation and vanity of the most splendid captives led in chains by the ambitious victors of the world, and the lavish profusion of gratuities usually dispersed

perfed and fattered in the progreff of their triumphs, when compared to that glorious redemption, and to thofe enduring gifts beftowed and fo liberally given unto men, upon the triumphant afcenfion of Chrift into Heaven.

This indeed was a moft illuftrious difplay of glory, and emphatically leading Captivity captive, when fuch fignal gifts were foon after diftributed in that manifold variety which God had never vouchsafed before to any of the fons of Adam. But it is certain the Mefſiah was to afcend agreeable to the types which prefigured, and the prophecies which exprefly foretold his afcenfion. This afcent was typified by the High-prieft, entering into the Holy of Holies, in conformity, to which the Apoſtle obſerves, Chrift being come an High-prieft of good things to come,——entered once into the holy place. And Enoch's and Elijah's tranſlation may very reaſonably be regarded as previous types of the Mefſiah. And the text cited from the pſalms is a plain

plain reference to what the Psalmist in another passage speaks, in these extraordinary words: Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. For Christ, the King of glory, *then*, went in, when, the Apostle assures us, he ascended up on high, he led Captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men, and thus eminently completed that prophecy. What I propose to prove from the text is,

I. That Christ really ascended up on high, or into Heaven, — And,

II. That he then led Captivity captive. — And,

III. That he gave gifts unto men. And lastly I shall conclude

IV. With some suitable inferences, as a proper application of the whole,

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I am first to prove, that when Jesus Christ ascended up on high he ascended into Heaven.

Our Saviour, before his death, had raised in the Apostles this certain expectation: for when he was about to leave the world, by dying for men, our Lord administers a seasonable consolation for their comfort under that loss: the particular design of which was to confirm their faith in this point, when it came to pass, I go away, says he, and come again unto you. This passage is cleared by a more full and express declaration from our Lord, in the following words: I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world and go to the Father. And, when many of his disciples were offended at that discourse of the spiritual eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, by imbibing his doctrine. The future easiness of this instruction, he illustrates, by a direct application to what in their present spirit and temper they would be

be indisposed to believe, as much more incredible: What and if ye see the Son of man ascend up where he was before, that is into Heaven? For our Saviour himself, speaking in the same chapter, says, I came down from Heaven. The ascending up, where he was before, means plainly, and without obscurity, his ascent into Heaven. This assurance was superadded to enliven their faith in this article, which was originally grounded upon the eminent predictions of the prophets, and the accomplishment is specified and recorded in the writings of the Apostles, which attestation is an abundant evidence of its truth. Let us therefore hear, and be determined by the decisive authorities which the scriptures afford to warrant a reasonable ascent. The truth of this article depends upon human and divine testimony, and the credibility of it is rendered satisfactory by the report of men and angels, who were present, and saw the whole transaction; and when those disciples could no longer see this ascent,
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the angels assured them that Christ would descend from Heaven in like manner, at the end of the world as they had seen him go up into Heaven.

St. Mark's account is, that after the Lord had spoken unto them, meaning the Apostles, he was received up into Heaven. And to this agrees the representation of St. Luke, who speaks on the same subject to this purpose. It came to pass, while he blessed them, *the Apostles*, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And St. Luke describes too the particular manner of this gradual ascent, with the remarkable circumstance of the two angels and their consequent assurance on this occasion. When our Lord had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward Heaven, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up

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from you into Heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven. And it deserves notice, that our Saviour had a particular design in the clear and distinct sight of his ascension, when he led them out as far as Bethany, and was there parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. The ascent from this eminence, or the Mount of Olives, rendered this whole transaction the more visible and conspicuous, as it was in the open air, and at such an height that no interposition of objects could intercept their view, and prospect. This circumstance fully proves there was no manner of delusion, and that the Apostles could not be mistaken, if men can be judges of what they plainly see in broad day-light and with their eyes open. They were sure the person, who thus ascended, was their Lord and Master, of which they could entertain no doubt, because he had frequently conversed with them for *forty* days after his resurrection. To whom he shewed himself
alive

alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments to the Apostles whom he had chosen. You may here observe that Christ was taken up in the same body in which he appeared. For, it is said, while they beheld, he was taken up, and they pursued them with their eyes till the cloud of glory, and the angels his attendants in this illustrious ascent conveyed him out of their sight. The Heaven here mentioned, means the Heaven of Heavens, or the highest Heaven, where God more especially manifests his presence in majesty and glory, who is equally present in every place. For the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain God, though God may make what manifestations of his glory, where, how, and when he pleases : but because the Almighty does this after an extraordinary manner in Heaven, Christ's ad-

mission to that illustrious state of exaltation is magnified with a grandeur of expression in order to convey the more noble idea of that eminent elevation to which he was conveyed: St. Paul for this reason affirms Christ ascended up far above all Heavens; and St. Peter confirms St. Paul's express declaration, where he says, *Jesus Christ* is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, authorities and powers being made subject to him. In this matter we have the unexceptionable evidence of no small number of spectators who were eye-witnesses to it, that they might bear witness to the truth, and their evidence stands confirmed upon record by the testimony of those angels, who were at that time present. And if any further evidence was necessary, the signal suffrage of St. Paul, whose conversion to Christianity was wholly miraculous, might be added for the full confirmation of this important truth. But the ample testimonies already produced, and the known characters of the Apostles for an uniform integrity of life and

and probity of manners prove beyond all reasonable doubt the certainty of Christ's ascension into Heaven. But when Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven, he is said to have ; *secondly,*

Led Captivity captive.

The great and powerful enemies, which Christ led captive, upon his ascension, were *Death, Sin, and the Devil*. For before this time the Apostle observes there prevailed the enslaving dominion of death and sin, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. The sense of which misery made St. Paul cry out, O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? And his direct answer determines this important point, *viz.* the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. For this purpose the Son of God took on him the nature of man, that through death he might deliver them, who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. For after he had overcome the

sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers, and, Heb. Chap. IX. Ver. 12. He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us by being the author and finisher of our faith. And because our Saviour endured the cross, despising the shame, he is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For Christ Jesus hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, thro' the gospel. And his ascension has destroyed the dominion of death, taken away its sting, and gained a complete victory over the grave, whose Captivity was led captive, when this same Jesus ascended into Heaven and death was swallowed up in victory.

But sin, the sting of death, which held men enslaved, was led captive at our Lord's ascension. This lapse or fall of man, was that corrupt fountain, which introduced mortality, and its tyranny became, from this unhappy cause, universally prevalent without any natural hope of release from
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its dominion. But thanks be to God who delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. For, as sin had reigned unto death, so grace in man's restoration reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ.

But our Lord most signally triumphed in this captivity, when in his ascension he led the great enemy of mankind, *the devil*, captive. By his suggestions our first parents were tempted and fell, but they had for their comfort an early promise of a full and complete conquest of the tempter, by the seed of the woman soon after their fall. This seed of the woman was *Jesus Christ*, who came in the fulness of time, and bound that strong man and spoiled him of his power in every contest and assault. Our Lord's success was signalized first in the wilderness, when he defeated the three

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successive

successive temptations of the devil, and manifested his superiority, by this rebuke; Get thee hence Satan. This power was after displayed in the course of his ministry when he cast out devils, and released the possessed from the devil's subjection; and obliged them to acknowledge and submit to his power and sovereignty: he also limited and circumscribed the extent of their power, when the devils could not enter into the herd of swine, without the permission of Christ. These are notorious evidences of the permission of Christ. These are notorious evidences of an invincible supremacy, which are further distinguished by the communication of the very same power, while he was alive. For we find the seventy returned again with joy from their mission, saying, Lord, even the *devils* are subject unto us through thy name. Upon which declaration remarkable is the reply of Jesus, who said unto them at that juncture, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven.

Heaven. But this fall, which even then began to take place, increased in its efficacy and extent when our Lord, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. For having thus spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it, who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God. Angels and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him. Thus Christ eminently fulfilled the prophecy of the seed of the woman, and emphatically bruised the serpent's head, and when he ascended up on high, he led in Captivity, the prince of the powers of the air, the ruler of the darkness of this world, with death and sin, captive. The consequence of this captivity comes next to be considered.

III. That after his glorious triumph, he gave gifts unto men.

The gifts here foretold and represented, as given—mean those eminent gifts bestowed

ed on the Apostles by the miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost, when they became in an instant fully qualified to go to all the world and preach the gospel, as the spirit gave them utterance. This was a donation surpassing in glory, and exceeding in excellency, and use, all the vain gratuities of worldly conquerors. For the medals stamp't with the image of the victor, on one side, and the description and panegyric of his services inscribed on the reverse, however profusely distributed in those triumphs, were only intended to perpetuate the memory of temporal obligations. But how weak an impression must those transient memorials make on the mind, when compared to those extraordinary endowments of power from on high. When that holy Spirit, recalled all things to the remembrance, opened their minds, illuminated their understanding, and was vouchsafed in a far greater measure than had been ever known from the beginning of the world. But the continuance

tinuance of this spirit is universally diffusive and operates in its ordinary influence to all ages and Christians, who are disposed to submit to its guidance, and follow its admonitions. And, for this reason, the Comforter abides for ever, who at first confirmed the Christian faith, with the evidence of signs and wonders, and divers gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to the will of God; that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God, and demonstration of the Spirit, who is ever ready to help our infirmities in all the difficulties and conflicts of the Christian warfare, and make us more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For all the various happy fruits of joy, peace, meekness, and love are the work of the one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. Gifts, these, as much more excellent in glory than those of the most celebrated generals, as the great captain of our salvation triumphed, more gloriously than they all.

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Thus you may observe the eminent distinction and characteristic of Christ's superiority in triumph. For when he ascended up on high, he led Captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Which leads us in the last place to conclude,

IV. From these several considerations, with a few suitable inferences, as a proper application to the whole.

And the proper consideration of Christ's ascension into Heaven affords a strong presumption and firm expectation of our going up into Heaven hereafter. For Christ's exaltation is an earnest and pledge, from which we may reasonably infer our future admission into those heavenly mansions by Christ Jesus. For one great end and design of Christ's going to the Father, was to prepare a place for us, that where he is, there we may be also. For this hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the vail, whether the forerunner is for

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us entered, who has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that by a true Christian faith we may become partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. But we must remember the indispensable condition, and take the more earnest heed that this important article of our faith have its perfect work. And its right influence is to animate and quicken us to the zealous pursuit of those things, which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Let therefore, our conversation be as becomes the noble citizens, and candidates for Heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour. This interesting consideration will fix a resolution, as faithful Christians to set our affections on things above, and not on things on earth. For where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. With this just sense, we shall be careful to mortify our members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection,

affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness ; because we know the pure in heart only shall see God. And agreeable to this important assurance is the remarkable decision of the royal Psalmist, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord : and who shall stand in His holy place ? The generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O God of Jacob !

We may further infer, from the consideration of Christ's leading Captivity captive, the victory, the success, and obligation of a true Christian faith. Our Lord assures us, for our comfort, under all trials and temptations, that he has overcome the world, and animates us with the pleasing encouragement to be of good cheer, for sin has now no longer dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, who has spoiled those great enemies of man, *sin*, *death*, and the *devil*, who lost their sting and power, when
Christ

Christ made a shew of them in an open triumph. So that we may well say, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? For we need be no longer, under any alarming terrors, because the old serpent, the devil, is reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day.—And we may also overcome the wicked one, by his powerful intercession, because greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. For in all things we may be more than conquerors through him that loved us. And if we be but careful to resist the devil, we may expect the promised success, and that he will flee from us. Be ye therefore sober and vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Him resist stedfast in the faith. For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith, by which we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Consider, therefore, the indispensable obligation

ligation and great end of this faith, and you will not let sin reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. But when we reflect that our conversation is in Heaven, how can we avoid pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This glorious prize may very justly be expected to prevail with those, who have this hope to run with patience the race that is set before them. And when you recollect, that you may become complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power, it may be presumed, you will scarce be weary, and despair of success in the great work of salvation. For, in full confirmation of this universal dominion, our Saviour is set down at the right hand of the majesty of God, exalted far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. But you may receive still stronger consolation if

if you consider the consequence of our
 Lord's ascension; who gave gifts unto
 men.

These were both the extraordinary and the
 ordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; the former
 were given to confirm and establish our
 common faith; and when this end was
 effectually secured, and the kingdoms of
 the world after a long and violent opposi-
 tion, were vanquished and converted, by
 the weapons of a spiritual warfare; then
 it was that kings became nursing fathers,
 and queens nursing mothers to the church;
 and those miraculous interpositions, exert-
 ed in its support, and propagation then cea-
 sed. But the ordinary assistance of the
 spirit still continues, and is to abide with
 the church for ever: and it is our duty to
 concur with this holy guidance, and not
 defeat the operations of the Holy Spirit
 which works in us both to will and to do
 of God's good pleasure. The way and
 manner God has not thought fit to explain;
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peace assurance. For we are admonished not to do despite to the Spirit of grace, and exhorted not to quench nor grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the Day of Redemption. For those only, who are led by the Spirit of God, approve themselves the sons of God. We should therefore, be ever careful to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For if we profess to live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit, and use all the means and opportunities afforded us for spiritual improvement. For how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation. And, if we resolve to be thus minded, the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet triumphantly. And if ye resolve to be thus minded, and not neglect this gracious overture which received such abundant confirmation, Your wants and necessities will be supplied with a sufficient assistance by the effectual ministration of the Holy Spirit, to make you perfect

perfect in every good work, and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet, and cause you to triumph in Christ.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

perfect in every good work, and the God
of peace shall bring down your feet,
and raise you to triumph in Christ.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be
with your spirit. Amen.

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S E R M O N V.
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*Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, I per-
ceive that God is no respecter of persons:
but in every nation he that feareth Him
and worketh righteousness, is accepted with
Him.*

THIS declaration of St. Peter was
occasioned upon a comparison of his
own with the narrative of Cornelius's vision.
This person was, as we find from his
chapter, a Roman officer, and called a
Centurion of the Italian band. But the

H 3 distinguishing

distinguishing quality, which recommends him to our especial notice is, his amiable character for uncommon piety and diffusive charity, under the opportunities of improvement, he then enjoyed. *Cornelius* was, as his history informs us, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house,—who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. And there is good reason to believe, from this account, he was one of those converted Gentiles who renounced idolatry, and worshipped the God of Israel without being circumcised. And, because his manner of life was agreeable to that state, God vouchsafed as the reward of it—the honour and privilege of an admission into the Christian religion. This especial favour was revealed by the message of an angel in a vision, who directed him to apply to *Peter* for proper instructions, previous to his admission. And in pursuance of this Divine direction *Cornelius* sent to Joppa for *Peter*.—But, because *Peter* had imbibed the same common prejudices,

prejudices; and was prepossessed with the prevailing opinion of the Jews, who believed that the Gentiles should not be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ, by the gospel; God thought fit to obviate this prepossession, and prepare *Peter* for *Cornelius's* message. Accordingly the Apostle in this interval had the vision of a sheet, let down from Heaven, in which were inclosed all sorts of animals, both clean and unclean,—and with an express permission to eat of either, without distinction or scruple. God prefigured by this general grant that the partition was now entirely removed; and the gospel to be preached to the Jew and Gentile promiscuously, or without any difference; and in order to confirm the certainty of the fact with unexceptionable assurance, this was done thrice. Immediately after this transaction the Holy Ghost commanded *Peter* to go with the persons who came for him, to *Cornelius*, without doubting. At this in-

servant, and in a conference at this juncture, *Cornelius* related the reason and occasion of his sending for St. Peter, and added—Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things, that are commanded thee, of God. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth, &c. But because these words are liable to misapplication,—and have been sometimes misunderstood, my design is to represent

I. The erroneous constructions, which have, for want of attention, been put upon this passage by perverting the proper sense, and meaning of it; from whence I propose, in the second place,

II. To offer to your consideration, the reasonable and just conclusion, from the words of the text. I am first to observe the misapplications; which I apprehend, have been made for want of due attention in perverting the true sense, and proper meaning

meaning of the words. One conclusion, which is drawn from this place, is, that all forms and dispensations of religion are of little signification, provided every man takes care to lead a good moral life; and this opinion it seems is warranted from the example of *Cornelius*; for the plea is, he worked righteousness under the influence of a right fear of God, and was therefore accepted. But the difference of circumstances should be undoubtedly observed, and it ought to be remembered, that his conversion was in the whole process of it extraordinary, and miraculous. For in this signal manner, it is most certain, *Cornelius* was accepted, by God. But can it hence be concluded with parity of reason, that any other man, who fears God, and works righteousness shall, without a singular interposition of Providence, be admitted to the same privileges, and an equal acceptance? There is evidently no parallel, nor similitude, but a remarkable distinction in the diversity of cases: and this diversity

proves

205 S E R M O N V.

proves sufficiently that notion to be an error of opinion, which is too credulously received without considering, or comparing circumstances.

But it may be said,—if God has made provision by revelation of *His will*, and has in this instituted religion, prescribed the manner of worship, and terms of acceptance, the greater conformity there is to the Divine pattern, the more pleasing will this resemblance of service be to God, *Cornelius*, we know, made this approach; and this was the occasion of his admission by God's particular call to the Christian state of salvation. And what room can there be to doubt why God should not appropriate special advantages and benefits to his own peculiar institution. The expectation is certainly just and reasonable, when the becoming obligation is enforced on all, who are taken into the covenant, to walk worthy of the high and holy calling in Christ Jesus. For in this state and representation—Christians are obliged to
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greater purity, suitable to the advantages they enjoy, and will be punished, with a severity proportionable to their aggravated neglect and abuse of God's grace. But no sentence is past upon those, who are without this privilege: for they are left to their own master, to stand, or fall, whose mercies are over all his works. And they may receive the benefit of the second covenant, though not particularly admitted, as those are supposed will be who lived before the coming of Christ. All such, if they do well, may hope to be accepted, though not by the assurance of any express stipulation on God's part for want of knowing the overture of reconciliation: but if they make a right use of the light afforded them, a still greater degree of reward may be vouchsafed in a way, which seems best to infinite wisdom: however, we may presume it will be adjusted to the nature of their service, though not precisely the same with those who have excelled under the favour of peculiar advantages.

argent. The rule I think, is a rule of proportion, and this distribution requires only to be proportionable and not exactly the same reward to all. For the equity and reasonableness of this mode of proceeding may be justified by the plain discrimination exemplified in the Parable of the Talents, where different rewards are dispensed according to the respective improvements of those servants in the right use and application of them. But in matters of grace and favour, God giveth to every one severally as He will, for the known difference of parts and capacities with the greater or less advantages and opportunities, both among nations and individuals, verifies the certainty of this unquestionable truth, and confirms the fact indisputable. And it is folly to question God's right: the proper consequence is thankfulness for what has been received, and a careful management of the talents intrusted, and the right exercise of them has all fitting encouragement to expect an increase of favours.

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But if God was to regulate his dispensations by the caprice and demands of unreasonable men, without distinction, there would be wanting the most conspicuous proof of infinite wisdom, displayed in the manifold works of the creation, by the admirable subordination distinguishable in the scale of beings. For the whole concern of Providence is to judge the world in righteousness, and minister true judgment to all people, which is effectually secured, when every one will not fail to receive his proper reward. This impartiality is easy, I think, to be conceived, and perfectly reconcilable with the same sincerity and like diligence under different dispensations; and the reasonable expectation of reward is founded and regulated by an evident difference of states and circumstances. The example of Cornelius's acceptance by God, implies an admission into the Christian covenant; and the only proper inference is, that no sincerity will lose its reward, but it can never be hence concluded that
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all shall be admitted to equal degrees of favour and acceptance. The utmost which can in reason be pleaded is an equitable allowance for the unavoidable want of greater assistance, and a reasonable abatement for invincible disadvantages, and the peculiar impediments of an unenlightened state. But when this right estimate is admitted, the just conclusion is not for the same, but a proportionable distribution of rewards. And those misapplications here specified are, sufficient conviction, that all such constructions are errors of judgment, and deductions so unreasonable, as to receive no countenance from the extraordinary case of Cornelius. And therefore I may proceed from these useful cautions to offer, secondly, **ho II.** To your consideration, the reasonable and just conclusions which the words of the text suggest to our notice and observation. The conversion of Cornelius will, I think, authorize this conclusion, that
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when the means and opportunities of an admission to higher privileges, and degrees of favour offer, the fear of God, and working righteousness appear a proper preparation and expedient, to accept with all thankfulness the overture; and to improve the advantage by a wise and becoming care to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This was evidently the case of this convert, and his fear of God; his charity and piety are the reasons assigned of that vision, and may therefore be considered as previous qualifications and fit introduction to the most perfect dispensation. But is it conceiveable or credible, that God Almighty would have interposed in this miraculous manner, without any consequent advantage to Cornelius? The supposition appears upon reflection unreasonable; and there is sufficient ground to believe from the whole transaction, that his sincerity would be more beneficial under the Christian, than it would have been upon

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on his continuance in the state of a Jewish proselyte. But his conversion on this occasion, proves his personal sense and persuasion of the great benefit, by a ready compliance with the proposal.

And if, in further consideration of this subject, we observe the bent of his will and the frame and disposition of his mind, there can, I think, be no objection why he should not gladly receive the word and be baptized, who had his call thro' this marvellous light so wonderfully attended, and divinely confirmed. For this fear of God seems to have been a fixed principle, and to have had a regular influence, by the practice of universal righteousness. And wherever this direction of a right conduct prevails, it will free the mind from the bias of corrupt affections and preserve the will in a constant disposition to do whatever may be discovered as matter of duty. But the constant exercise of this punctual obedience will engage a resolution to have always a conscience void of offence towards
no God,

God; and towards man. In this pious state every overture of grace, which affords a clearer knowledge, will be received with due reverence and sensible gratitude; but the declared terms of acceptance in the gospel will encourage a sincere repentance in virtue of the oblation once offered for all past sins both of infirmity and presumption. For the grace and truth which came by *Jesus Christ* speak comfort to the soul, and are such an assurance of pardon and salvation, which the law of Moses typified obscurely, or at best expressed with rigour. But the law of nature was intirely silent either as to this peace, or to the conditions of restoration to God's favour. And from this silence arose all those doubts and suspicions, which have ended in uncertainty after all the vain attempts to discover the true methods of reconciliation by unassisted reason, without any tolerable attainment to a rational satisfaction.

And therefore, when the gospel is considered a state of freedom, every one who

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has this means of conviction afforded him, and is predisposed by the fear of God and working righteousness, will be glad to receive the word of life, and regulate his conduct by this knowledge of salvation and its secure directions. The natural consequence will be a chearful conformity to its unerring rules: and the due subjection will manifest its power in casting down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, by bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. For the most intricate dispensations of Providence will be regarded, as the counsels and determinations of infinite wisdom, whose ways are not as our ways—nor his thoughts as our thoughts. But though his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out, yet we may safely believe that the rectitude of God's government will be hereafter justified, and the seeming irregularities and difficulties solved, by the strict impartiality of a most righteous sentence.

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The satisfaction of this persuasion will free the mind from all doubt and give a right direction to and produce a reasonable and proper influence on our thoughts and actions. For whoever hath these promises will be inclined to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And these exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, under the prevalency of such a fear will prove a sufficient preservative from the corruptions that are in the world thro' lust: and these powerful motives will enforce the most extensive practice for the giving all diligence to add to faith, virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience Godliness; and to Godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness *charity*; that by a proficiency in these improvements there may be a gradual and successive advancement to perfection.

But in such a state of holy conversation and Godliness, the work of righteousness

will become universal, and the gospel motives and inducements will appear the most efficacious in securing the success. These abundant encouragements prompt us to do good to all without exception—to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees not only in the love of our neighbour, but in the love of our enemies, after the unparalleled example of our blessed Saviour, who commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us *all*.

There is therefore, sufficient reason to conclude that with such qualifications the scheme of the gospel, as suited to Cornelius's wants would be agreeable to his wish, and become the object of a *wise choice*. But when the partition between Jew and Gentile was intirely withdrawn and an admission to the light of the glorious gospel of Christ was made by a special overture from Heaven; there could remain no prejudice, nor scruple for the refusal or neglect of so great salvation. For God's interposition

terposition opened for him an easy passage to the kingdom of grace, and this entrance directed the certain way to the succeeding kingdom of glory by a compliance with the exprets terms so revealed. And in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, may without doubt be in this manner accepted by Him; but it is to be observed further, what hope and encouragement the example of *Cornelius* will afford to those, who are without these privileges; but still make the best use of that imperfect light, and improve those opportunities they enjoy in a state of unassisted nature. And *Cornelius*, his case, I think, authorizes no certain decision on this point, for want of an exprets warrant: but then the reason and equity of such cases will, justify the expectation of a suitable indulgence, and proportionable degree of God's favour, even when there is no direct and explicit provision. For, if the fear of God enlivens a reverence of His Majesty and avoidance of every known

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offence. This solicitude for the pleasure of his maker will awaken a constant vigilance to observe a fixed perseverance to do whatever appears to be the will of God. And the uniform tenour of this regular conduct will not only prevent the tyranny and dominion of the most flagrant and presumptuous sins. And we have reason to hope, in equity, that those failures and imperfections, which are the mere effect of a disadvantageous state, without any fault, and the necessity of mens outward conditions, will receive a compassionate extent of pardon and favour in virtue of that sacrifice once made for the sins of the whole world.

This representation of things does not suppose so acceptable an observance of duty under the disadvantages of natural, as may justly be expected from a right improvement of revealed religion. Accordingly, the difference and degrees of the rewards are adapted to these respective states. And therefore, we have reason to believe, that the

the sincere, though imperfect, practice of righteousness by the general tenour of a man's behaviour, in consequence of that portion of light which God has vouchsafed him, will be admitted to a favourable acceptance by the grace of the gospel. But certainly no conclusion can be formed for their condemnation; who have always lived under the absolute and unavoidable want of a more perfect light.

In the mean time let us leave the dispensation of mercy, with the manner and measures of it to God's infinite wisdom; for we may be assured the judge of all the world will do what is right and fit. It certainly becomes us to reflect, to whom much is given, of the same in all justice will much be required; and therefore, if we have neglected so great salvation, to us properly belong shame and confusion of face for the ungrateful neglect, and gross abuse. But it concerns us still more to recollect, that where grace does abound, the obligation to abound in every good work,

is increased, and the very advantage of this light reinforces the special and incumbent obligation, to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our common Father, who is in Heaven. And this, God himself infinitely meritoriously grants for Jesus Christ's sake, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as usual, the absolute

of a more perfect light. In the mean time let us leave the dispensation of mercy, with the manner and measures of it to God's infinite wisdom; for we may be assured the Judge of all the world will do what is right and fit. It certainly becomes us to reflect, to whom much is given, of the same in all justice will much be required; and therefore, if we have neglected to great salvation, to us properly belong shame and confusion of face for the ungrateful neglect, and gross abuse. But it concerns us still more to reflect, that where grace does abound, the obligation to abound in every good work,

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 his own words, and it is no less cer-
 tain, his warmth of temper, heated with
 an over-hasty zeal, made him too common-
 and confident. The resolution was last-
 ingly and generous, but the event proved

S E R M O N VI.

MARK, Chap. XIV. Ver. 29, 30, 31.

*But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall
 be offended, yet will not I.*

*And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto
 thee, that this day, even in this night, be-
 fore the cock crow twice—thou shalt deny
 Me thrice.*

*But he spake the more vehemently, If I should
 die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in
 any wise.*

THERE can be no doubt but this de-
 claration of St. Peter was honest and
 sincere on this occasion ; for when he ut-
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tered these words, he certainly spoke what he then *really* meant, and it is no less certain, his warmth of temper, heated with an over-hasty zeal, made him too earnest and confident. The resolution was laudable and generous, but the event proved it faulty and ineffectual, because formed upon a sudden start of thought, and without mature deliberation. His unsuspected miscarriage therefore, manifests exemplarily the wisdom and prudence of never resolving rashly, we know not what, and it is a reasonable caution to beware of imaginary security, and dangerous presumption. For which reason let him, that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

The condition of man in this world is a state of probation and temptations are the exercise and test of virtue. But this capacity must be exerted to prevent a lapse under the pressure, and prevalence of temptations, when they happen. These seem easy to be overcome at a distance, and when not felt; but the time of trial discovers the strength

strength or weakness of a fancied attachment under the strongest assurances—The fall of St. Peter confirms this a plain fact—who, when our Lord foretold how often and within what compass of time, the *denial* should be repeated, thought this irresolution impossible, and depended on his own strength. This vain self-dependence betrayed the impotence of frail man when not supported and strengthened by the powerful assistance of God, who worketh in men both to will and to do of his good pleasure, under all temptations. But still St. Peter's sorrow and repentance, upon our Saviour's silent reproof of his offence, argue his just sense of having thought too highly of himself—and the mortifying conviction made a lasting impression for the continued influence appeared in his future conduct, by a remarkable diffidence and modesty ever after that; and we may therefore profit by his example, and improve by his fault; I propose to consider,

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—(3.) The previous circumstances of his fall—which was the denial of Christ.—I shall hence observe in the second place,

—II. The edifying part of St. Peter's conduct after his inconsiderate confidence.— I am first to consider the probable occasion and circumstances of his fall.

All scripture, we know, is written for our instruction, and even the infirmities and faults of the Apostles are recorded for our admonition and improvement. I may therefore, with this warrant, venture to treat on this subject. For the Apostle most certainly permitted, if he did not direct St. Mark to insert this account—who wrote his gospel with St. Peter's approbation, and inspection. The narrative may therefore, with this authority, be supposed fairly capable of affording instruction; and the application will in this view have a real use—and answer the original intention. And we may here pertinently remark that
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the natural bent of St. Peter's temper was one prevailing motive of his precipitating himself in difficulties; and the event in the present instance served to convince by woeful experience, that sudden starts and resolutions, and the execution of them are by no means certain, and sublequent. But that it is one thing to mean, and resolve well, and another to execute sincere intentions. This is the characteristic of his temper in many instances of his conduct, who appeared forward and adventurous in undertaking, without the least apprehension of failure or doubt of success; and this want of reflection, it may be concluded, made this zealous disciple of our Lord insensible of all danger, at a distance. And his request and attempt to walk and meet Christ on the water, is a remarkable proof that this was the foible of his disposition. For he seems not to have suspected his want of power till he began to sink, and then in unavoidable distress, when the wind

wind was violent, he cried, Lord save me! When, therefore, precipitancy, and a warm zeal constitute and distinguish his character—it is no wonder to find him under this propensity—the first of the Apostles in professing, and acting upon every opportunity which corresponded with his inclination. This eagerness prompted him to ask questions, to desire a solution of doubts, and request the interpretation of parables. The same warmth appeared in his replies, and declarations of his opinion. Hence was that quickness in his profession, that *Christ* was the Messiah. Hence too, that offence he took at our Saviour's foretelling His own sufferings. And hence likewise, that solicitation to continue on the Mount at our Lord's transfiguration. This impetuosity of temper provoked him to engage to do more than the rest of the disciples ventured to propose. And this ruling passion heated St. Peter to resent the indignity offered to *Our Lord* when he drew his sword, and cut off the servant of
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the High-Priest's right ear. These several instances tend to confirm his natural temper, before the descent of the Holy Ghost. And therefore, some disappointments became necessary to check his vanity and presumption,—to teach him by personal experience, the weakness of human nature.

But an utter ignorance of himself and his own abilities, contributed more to ensnare and betray this Apostle into that ignominious fall; for the passions seem to have been more consulted—than the dictates of impartial and cool reason; and the effect was just what might be expected in such cases,—and is usual under an uncommon trial of virtue. The present temper and disposition was known, but the remote danger was not considered, nor the difficulty of the severe conflict estimated: he presumed too much on his own strength and fell by presumption. And his example proves the great reasonableness of representing future temptations frequently

as present, and foreseeing their approach. This circumspection, and fore-thought will be the most effectual security of virtue; and prove an advisable preparation to stand the shock, to make a way to escape, and to obtain the victory, under an invasion. And the use and advantage of this practice is confirmed by our Saviour in an apt illustration, where he exemplifies the wisdom of a previous computation of the ability, and charge, before a man will begin to build, lest he be not able to complete his plan. But the suddenness of this resolution, and his inexperience of perseverance for want of trial, seems evidently to have been a principal occasion of *his fall*. For when he said, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Was it not the effect of implicit affection, rather than the thoughtful result of deliberate judgment? Accordingly it may be observed, that persons the least conversant in difficulties, and unacquainted with danger, are commonly most

most apt to boast of untried courage, and can proceed to a defiance of the King of terrors, when warmed with affection, and agitated by zeal. But then it is certain, the apprehension of approaching evil extinguishes the flame of this premature resolution; and misconduct or desertion, under trial, exposes the vanity of these raw soldiers; for it is in the Christian, as in other warfares--where the veteran is formed by long experience. And the wise and knowing, from a just sense of the uncertain event in perilous cases are never high-minded, but fear: for it is not justifiable to grow secure and careless under success, because security breeds presumption. Presumption, inattention; and inattention leads to the neglect of advantages; and from a neglect of advantages, a fall may ensue by a surprize of even experienced fortitude, and approved magnanimity. But how probable is it, that the confident boaster may be foiled, and disgraced upon

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the first assault of his imaginary virtue. The case of St. Peter suggests to our notice that this was the true cause and unfortunate occasion of *his denial*.

For it was this presumption and intire confidence in his own sufficiency that diverted his thoughts from a suspicion of failure. With this indeliberate persuasion he was full of himself, and would not allow a possibility of his *falling*—because when our Lord himself assured him of the event—and fore-warned him of his impotence, it is remarkable the Apostle's confidence was increased,—his professions became more vehement, and his resolutions of course more rash in this heat of his zeal. St. Peter presumes on the future and present, with equal assurance of success without the aid of superior assistance, to support him under the conflict. In the vanity of this conceit, he follows our Saviour at a distance—after he was seized, to see the end; when the rest of the disciples forsok him, and fled. *Their* fault was desertion,

sertion, but his running immediate into danger was attended with greater guilt, the *denial of his Lord*. His fall therefore, undeniably proves that self-sufficiency and conceit are not the prerogative, but humility and dependence the common duties of frail man. For we are assured that God in judgment and mercy resisteth the *proud*, and giveth grace to the humble. And agreeable hereto Solomon observed long ago—pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. For is it not a just judgment of the Almighty, when vain man affects independency, to mortify that pride of heart, by some afflicting disgrace? This correction, with judgment, if duly considered, will appear a particular act of mercy: for when the party is grown sensible by woeful experience of the infirmity of human nature, he will learn diffidence, mistrust, and caution.—And the known folly of his past presumption will suggest the wisdom of being better instructed in applying to God

for His sufficiency, to perfect his weakness in the future course of his conduct. For if we make this right use of *St. Peter's fall*, we shall neither transgress in overloading his memory with undue honours; nor be guilty of imputing privileges and powers to his office, or person, which were never intended for either. From what has been discoursed, let us make a few useful remarks before we proceed to our second observation.

And it is obvious, that there is a gradual progress in sin, and a first violation of God's laws makes the way easy, either by a repetition of the same crime, or for the commission of any other, as occasion requires, and temptations offer. For it generally happens that there is a series and connection in sinning—and one crime succeeds another, when the inclosures of virtue are once broke through, and the fence removed. Accordingly, experience frequently confirms what is now advanced—for there are stages in vice—and the greatest

greatest reluctance of conscience is to the first transgression. But when remonstrances are over-ruled by the entrance of sin, the reluctance is weakened, and at last neglected. There is under this subjection great danger of not stopping at a single act, and but little prospect of retreat, and recovery. And the great probability of this common consequence is verified in the particular case of the Apostle, who, when he was first charged with being a disciple of Christ, denied *his Master*. And when the charge was repeated, the denial was again repeated, — But, when an assurance from his dialect or speech was urged to prove he was a disciple, his *denial* was the third time aggravated with the additional guilt of oaths and imprecations. And is not this remarkable example a signal evidence of the deceitfulness, and unsuspected progress of sin? and that no one can know the enormity or extent of wickedness, he may become capable of, when he flatters himself with the vain imagination of make-

ing an uncertain stand. For the hope of supernatural deliverance cannot reasonably be expected in ordinary cases,——and St. Peter's should be considered as an uncommon and exempt case, who was reserved for the work and ministry of an Apostle. But, as Christians in general have neither promise nor encouragement for the like extraordinary interposition, it is their incumbent duty, from frequent admonitions of the hazard and deceitfulness of sin, to flee from and resist its delusive temptations.——

This care and vigilance are the more necessary, because the lapse and compliance tend to induce and confirm a hardness and impenitence of heart. For while the sense of shame continues, the sinner feels some inward check—sins with remorse, and seeks either to avoid the crime, or palliate the transgression. But the progressive nature of vice soon effaces all modest impressions; the sinner, in the process, contracts an insensibility of disgrace, and passes, by an
easy

easy transition to sins of presumption. This natural effect is visible in the whole conduct of St. *Peter*, who seems willing to have eluded the accusation, rather than have been guilty of direct falsifications, when there was this remarkable evasion in his answer. I know not, says he, to the first charge, neither understand I what thou sayest : But when this guarded reply was not satisfactory, the second denial was necessarily uttered with an emboldened air of assurance. And when this likewise disappointed his expectations, the Apostle was reduced to the utmost extremity, and in order to free himself from the importunity of this charge, his guilt became enhanced by the accumulation of imprecations and oaths. This seems to be the tendency, and this the usual event, when security and innocence are no longer consistent, and reconcilable. Man first falls through frailty, time increases the corruption,—he then offends with malicious wickedness, and under a confirmed degeneracy,

generacy, glories in his shame. St. Peter, it is certain, did not arrive at this excess of guilt; but, it is very observable every subsequent denial was aggravated; and he might, if not prevented, have been given over to a reprobate mind, and the consequent practice of all uncleannels with greediness. Let us therefore proceed to consider,

II. The edifying part of the Apostle's conduct, after his abjuration, upon a penitent sense of his crime, and an humble recollection of his inconsiderate confidence. — The first and most natural observation is the immediate return and seasonable repentance of the Apostle upon the first opportunity. For the three several *denials* may be considered as one continued act of transgression, under the prevailing influence of sudden surprize and an over-ruling fear. But when the remembrance of our Saviour's prediction was re-called by the second crowing of the *cock*, and his memory

mony enlivened by the awful and affecting look of his Master,—his conscience took the alarm, and the horror of his crime appeared with all its aggravations. For when Peter thought thereon, he was stung with remorse, covered with shame, seized with anguish, and full of trouble and displeasure. He retired to bewail the weakness of his shameful apostacy, with weeping and lamentation.

His example affords us—this useful instruction, never to suffer sin to get the dominion over us,—but when we are so unhappy as to fall, to rise by immediate repentance. This resolution will be the most effectual check to the growth of sin, and a sensibility and fear of quenching the spirit will prove a further security. But the right application of the suggestions of the Holy Spirit will add an efficacy to our endeavours, become a preservative, and keep us from presumptuous sins. And a seasonable reflection on the sinfulness of vicious habits recommend and enforce the necessity
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of a timely reformation. For perseverance and impenitence harden the heart, and God will not always strive with the perverseness of man. It is therefore advisable to be attentive and obedient to all the various calls, while the season of mercy is continued, and men are yet in a reclaimable temper. For there is less difficulty of return to an early penitent, and greater encouragement to hope for the recovery of one, who has been misled by a conscious sense of inadvertency, and neglect.

Agreeable hereto was this Apostle's after-conduct. For the consciousness of his *fall*, and the constant remembrance of it, cooled the heat, and regulated that precipitate zeal by knowledge; and the sense of his past guilt proved the just occasion of his exerting a greater degree of diligence. For, it is remarkable what carefulness, what indignation, what zeal to approve himself in all things—this godly sorrow wrought in him! and what application every recollection inspired, to make his calling and election sure. And what

what St. Paul observed in his own case, may, I apprehend, be extended to St. Peter on this occasion—and is the true reason why they *both* laboured more abundantly than the rest, to make amends for their respective crimes of *denial*, and *persecution*. The greater joy therefore, which is declared to be in Heaven for the conversion of one sinner, than in the perseverance of the just is grounded, I presume, on this suitable demeanor. For it is natural to sinners of ingenuous and candid dispositions, when they have much forgiven them—to sorrow after a Godly sort—to weep much—and love much. This right apprehension will, upon a considerate review, quicken their contention to press forward for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And where this beneficial effect succeeds upon mens miscarriages, their sins become the means of rectifying past neglects by a wise improvement of the time to come, to the most valuable purposes. This is the best use to
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be made of our faults, and when transgressors thus sensibly humble themselves for what had been done amiss, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, there is sufficient encouragement to expect comfort and refreshment, especially since God, whose name is Holy, has added—I dwell with those of a contrite and humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

But the continued impression and uniform humility of the Apostle may be noted from his whole behaviour afterwards. This visible difference may be illustrated from our Lord's conference *with Peter*, after His resurrection; when our Saviour asked him this question; Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? The answer sufficiently shews, Peter had learned to think soberly; for he is contented with a modest appeal to Christ's certain knowledge of his firm attachment to Him, without the least hint of preference,

ference, or even the implication of a comparison. And the particular manner of His crucifixion with his head downwards, which was his choice, and request, is an unexceptionable proof that he constantly preserved an humbleness of mind, and manifested that Christian temper in his death.

The useful instruction afforded by his example recommends to our practice the modesty and contrition of an humble penitent, who never fails to be more deeply affected with the folly of his deviations, than elate with the advantage of reformation, or the wisdom of a return to duty. For the true convert's option is lowliness of mind, who is always more intent on abasing, than exalting himself; and because he is sensible of numerous defects, and conscious of the danger of a proud heart he seeks occasions to mortify, and avoids all mortification

fication of pride. With this sense the good man condemns his transgressions, and imputes his proficiency in goodness to God's grace co-operating with his own honest endeavours. The continual growth in all virtue and Godliness of living, is ever recollected with due praise and thanksgiving to God, the Author; while His apostacy is never forgot, but applied as a most powerful motive to keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right.

Thus in a course of mortification, self-denial and sincere repentance for past offences, the convert goes down to the grave in peace,——and becomes daily more and more qualified to pass from the gate of death, by a joyful resurrection to life everlasting,——where the penitent exalted in God's due time shall be made to hear of joy and gladness,——when those bones, to use the
language

language of the Psalmist, which have
been here broken, shall rejoice for
ever. —————

language of the Plains, which have
been here broken, shall rejoice for

S E R M O N VII.

JOB. Chap. XXVII. Ver. 28.

*For what is the hope of the hypocrite, tho' he
hath gained, when God taketh away his
soul?*

THE expression of the text, tho' in the form of an interrogation and an enquiry into what the hypocrites hope is in fact, yet appears evidently a positive decision of the case, and implies that a man of this infamous character, neither has, nor can have any comfortable degree of hope. Job appears to have been charged by his friends with *hypocrisy* in his past conduct.

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An accusation so odious was to a man conscious of his integrity a most sensible affliction, and therefore engaged him in a direct vindication of his innocence. And to obviate the calumnious aspersions he solemnly declares he had always acted with perfect sincerity, and was resolved, whatever a censorious world might think and pronounce from appearance, still to have this substantial comfort under all calamities, viz. That his conscience should never reproach him to the day of his death, God forbid that I should justify you: 'till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. After this honest protestation of his past integrity, and his laudable resolution to act for life, upon the same principles; he expostulates with his friends upon the unreasonable rigour of their charge. *Job* seems to say, observe the regular uniformity of my life; how all my actions are regulated by the strictest principles of virtue and religion; my study and intention

intention being to approve myself to God, and by my sincerity to secure his future favour and acceptance. Reflect on the other hand, how the *hypocrite*, in all his transactions, is influenced by gain, and, as he sacrifices his virtue to sordid avarice, he disclaims all hopes of futurity. *Hypocrisy*, I grant, is often attended with considerable advantages and interest in this state of things, and will engage the greedy *worldling* to put on the habit of virtue, and wear a mask. But then, I must observe in honour of *integrity*, that the dazzling baits of lucre will never have any influence on the upright, who act under the firm persuasion of a happy immortality, as the just recompence of their sincerity. And upon this fair representation of the difference of motives and principles, consider mine and the hypocrite's conduct, and I am persuaded, you will acquit me of the guilt, and charge of *hypocrisy*. For I am under no fear of death, my innocence gives me an assurance of bliss, and immortality encourages me to welcome my dissolution: but if I, as you

unreasonably suspect, and censure me, was indeed a *hypocrite*, I should dread death from its consequence, forasmuch as I could then have no *hope*. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, &c. These words represent in a very lively manner,

I. That *hypocrisy* is folly and delusion at present, and certain ruin in the final event: and from this consideration they persuasively recommend

II. The constant practice of *integrity* as the wisest choice, forasmuch as this imminent quality makes men easy and satisfied in all conditions, and confirms the joyful expectation of a glorious immortality.

And first, that *hypocrisy* is folly, &c.

It is obvious *Job* pronounces this sentence upon *hypocrisy*, when crowned with a continued series of success. It is folly, because it centers all happiness in the enjoyments of the world, to the manifest neglect of immortality. For, in his opinion,

nion, no momentary advantage, not the greatest imaginable, is a tolerable compensation for the loss of eternal happiness. Because the unlawful acquisition and criminal possession of worldly goods precludes all claim and title, and cuts off the hopes of heaven. *Hypocrisy* is a manifest delusion, as it seduces the hypocrite to renounce heaven, and exchange that momentous interest, eternal happiness in reversion, for the precarious advantage of a little present profit. And therefore *Job*, allowing hypocrisy all the advantages the hypocrite can either wish or reap from it, intimates plainly that it is a fallacious choice; because it leaves the hypocrite hopeless with reference to his portion in a future state.

The hypocrite's condition then in the most advantageous view, is apparently miserable. But what, if the hypocrite should miscarry in his mercenary schemes? If his hypocrisy instead of being an expedient to increase his riches proves in fact an obstacle to the improvement of his fortune? And

the supposition in the text, though he hath gained, is a plain indication that the hypocrite is not always sure to succeed by *hypocrisy*. He indeed assumes the dress and habit of religion, and hopes to conceal his knavery under the formalities of outward sanctity. And the general intention of appearing in this counterfeit character, and acting in disguise, is the better to carry on the trade of interest. This is the ultimate end and drift of his whole scheme. But then *Job* evidently suggests this is far from being an infallible method to thrive in the world, and can only be considered as a probable means, and such as may often fail of success. For tho' a hypocrite may, and sometimes does prosper by artful subtilty, yet hypocrisy once detected proves a disappointment, and prejudice to his interest. So that what he apprehended would be the very expedient to distinguish and elevate his fortune, is frequently the immediate occasion of degrading and plunging him into contempt.

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It is obvious from this representation of hypocrisy, that *Job* considered its common event as a bare contingency or chance; and in this view he condemns the practice of it as justly exceptionable; and is for laying it aside intirely, as it may probably end in disappointment and confusion. For, though a man may make it in speculation subservient to his interest, he may, most likely, and in appearance will be deceived in the application. Hypocrisy is therefore to be discarded, as it has a tendency to disappoint the selfish expectations and darling pursuits of the mercenary hypocrite, and is upon this estimate, and in *Job's* sentiments, truly folly and delusion, even upon worldly considerations. And if we appeal to experience and observation, frequent instances will convince us of the fact, and confirm us in this opinion.

Hypocrisy, it is true, may be sometimes serviceable in promoting an immediate interest, and is therefore an effectual expedient subservient for that end. For while the hypocrite acts under the appearance,

and with the solemnity of religious professions, he may, without difficulty, play the *knave*. His apparent sanctity will incline the charitable part of mankind to think well of him, till they have reason to do otherwise: and this good opinion may induce men of penetration and caution to repose a confidence in, and so be abused and betrayed by him, whenever a favourable opportunity for gain offers, and therefore it necessarily requires time to detect the cheat and expose the *hypocrisy*. But when the discovery is once made, and the lurking villainy laid open, this notice is a public alarm to trust the insidious impostor no longer, and a constant admonition to guard against future treachery. And his present shameful success will in a great measure assist in preventing his future unrighteous gains. For all who come to know his character will prove spies and observers of his conduct in their necessary intercourse; and their knowledge of, and just suspicion of imposition and fraud, will dissuade all communication

communication and commerce with such a one, when it can be well avoided.

And hence it is obvious, that if the rest of mankind are at all influenced by interest, the hypocrite will certainly be a sufferer, for every wise man in trade, or in any profession, will industriously decline dealing with a known knave; and common prudence and common practice sufficiently justify the observation. Hypocrisy therefore, upon worldly considerations, appears mistaken policy, as it has a direct tendency to prejudice, and ruin the hypocrite in his general interest. And the probability of miscarrying in the prosecution of his grand point *gain*, is hence evident, because he will frequently be perplexed with a variety of measures and different interests; and opposition of affairs will often interfere and clash, till a necessity of acting manifests and betrays the hypocrite. And when his reputation becomes branded with the odium of hypocrisy, all his schemes and projects will be blasted and ruined, and himself rendered incapable of doing any extensive mischief

mischief or damage; for he will be detested and abhorred by the generality of mankind, and shunned and avoided as the common pest, and traitor of society.

And how artful soever his future conduct may prove, his accuracy of behaviour will be regarded as subtilty and contrivance, and confirm the suspicion of a wicked intention, as a stratagem calculated to cheat with the better grace. And the apprehension of imposition will naturally occasion a diffidence; and this diffidence will appear in a prudent refusal of all intercourse in cases where it is practicable. And in these circumstances his opportunities of traffick will be abridged and contracted in a narrow compass, and in consequence the very means of getting money by hypocrisy and guile will be stinted and prevented; for who, in his senses, would choose to expose himself to the fraud and delusion of a professed knave? Hypocrisy then, in point of interest, and even under the notion of cunning, seems mistaken policy, and is generally in fact, to be pronounced *folly*.

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But if we extend our prospect to the final event, and consider his portion in an after state, the hypocrite is irrecoverably ruined; for he professedly renounces all pretensions to futurity, because inconsistent with his iniquitous pursuits, and therefore is at no pains to make a provision for an *hereafter*. His great idol is *wealth*; he is bent on growing *rich*, and this single point engrosses his thoughts and application. The means are regarded no further than as they are serviceable to carry on his schemes — and *good* or *bad*, makes no difference with him if it answers his present exigences: this is an ample circumstance, for his sole aim is with the rich fool in the gospel, to pronounce *rest* to his soul in the acquisition of an hoard of riches. But if he is disappointed in his project, and his scheme of hypocrisy deceives him, he is then a deluded wretch while living, and what is most deplorable, for ever miserable at his death. Therefore every wise man will make choice of that scheme of life as is most eligible, which will be attended with present success; and
communicate

communicate peace and tranquility of mind in the comfortable assurance of a glorious resurrection to life eternal. And this leads me to enforce, what the words of the text persuasively recommend, viz.—The constant practice of *integrity*, as the wisest choice; forasmuch as this eminent quality will make men easy and satisfied in all conditions, and confirms the joyful expectation of a glorious immortality.

And it is surely a considerable recommendation of *integrity*, that the sense and reflection of having done our duty, will lessen the real evils of life; and make even distress itself tolerable. For when the conscience is free from *guilt*, the good man dreads no impending evils, nor sinks under the burthen of calamities; but the pious sufferer's innocence, when overtaken with the pressure of affliction, proves his support and comfort. And men of this happy character, in the elegant language of scripture, though they should be troubled, yet will they never be distressed; though perplexed, yet not despair; though persecuted,

ed, yet not forsaken; though cast down, yet not destroyed. Peace of mind and satisfaction of conscience will enable them to endure all the troubles and distresses of life, with an invincible intrepidity. And the pleasure arising from the deliberate review of a life well spent, blunts the edge of calamities; for the consciousness of this complacency administers not a transient relief only, but a constant consolation and cheerfulness in the bitterness of affliction. This advantage *Job* experienced personally, in the extremity of his trouble. When his friends would have extorted by rigorous censures a confession of hypocrisy from him, he professes his perfect innocence with emotion, and protests, with a generous abhorrence of their uncharitable charge, that no insinuation should ever draw this shameful acknowledgement from his lips. And he says, with a kind of triumph on this occasion, No, I thank God my heart is sound and honest; and therefore as I hitherto have the grateful approbation of my conscience, let my outward circumstances
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of life continue the most wretched imaginable, I am determined to preserve my integrity, and to enjoy the experience while I live; God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.

And this consolation is the common inheritance of every upright man equally with Job, who in all the revolutions and changes of life, heroically keeps his innocence, and is inflexibly resolved to die with that glorious and honourable character. These venerable persons, from the confidence of a conscience void of offence, are dispirited at no dangers, but defeat calamities by a patient fortitude. They have, in their greatest exigencies and trials, a constant friend and comforter, that valuable, that desirable blessing, *peace of mind*: a blessing personal and independent of the world; and which is the most considerable satisfaction, a sure and certain friend in the day of adversity. For this is a perpetual spring of
comfort

comfort and delight; and hence, as the Psalmist justly represents their case, to the *upright* there ariseth light in the darkness. Their past integrity, and present resignation under the dispensations of an all-wise Providence, gives a superiority and victory over misfortunes, and entitle them by this additional instance of submission, to his special favour and protection. They are satisfied from a consideration of God's wisdom and goodness, and assured by the declarations of scripture, that the father of mercy and God of all comfort does never willingly grieve the children of men, and therefore their distress is intended as a gracious discipline, and will, if duly improved, contribute to their perfection and happiness. Thus was the blessed author of our salvation made perfect through sufferings, and this blessing will *all* his meek and afflicted disciples reap, if they follow his glorious example by a sincere, tho' imperfect innocence and virtue. This great benefit then, and the assurance God has given by an express promise, that he will never
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leave nor forsake his faithful servants, is a sufficient support and encouragement under the troubles and distresses of life. For, since the virtuous and innocent have in all events and casualties, in the evil day, a safe asylum, they may calmly acquiesce in the patronage of their gracious and almighty Protector, who will vouchsafe a deliverance, or else convert their troubles into blessings, by making these seeming severities acts of grace, in contributing to their final happiness and salvation. And hence, it is obvious that men of integrity in the most calamitous circumstances are far from being destitute; and though all around them should be involved in darkness, yet they have reason to be contented, as there is a perfect calm within, and their innocence engages the peculiar care of Heaven, and assures to their hopes the reversion of a glorious immortality.

But I must observe, to the advantage of honesty and integrity, that they have a natural tendency to improve the fortunes, and promote the interest of men, in this world;
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and therefore, in common policy there is special reason and inducement to cultivate these beneficial virtues; for, who is so fit to be trusted as the man whose candour and ingenuity obviate all suspicions of dishonesty? who is influenced always, in every transaction, by a principle of conscience; and would never violate it for the most valuable consideration,—not to gain the world? A man of this rare character deserves, and justly challenges, a confidence from all; for no change of circumstances can shake his integrity, or force him to betray his trust, and in his conscience and sincerity the world has such a security, which, if it universally prevailed, would make the expedience of bonds and contracts perfectly useless and insignificant. For men of true probity have an inviolable reverence for equity, and resolve sooner to suffer in their properties, than betray a sordid spirit in tricking and shuffling. Integrity is the reigning principle in their whole commerce with others, and even in the necess-

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sary competitions of life, they act with a scrupulous fidelity, and with the strictest honour; reject all indirect practices, all the doubles, the evasions and refinements of artifice and cunning, and apply to none but fair and warrantable means to carry their point. And wherever these men are disengaged, they on every occasion, manifest a benevolence, a generosity, and fraternal zeal, in promoting the welfare and happiness of mankind. Their innocence, their simplicity, their integrity, their benevolence, will attract the admiration, command the reverence, and engage the esteem and love of all considerate conscientious men. And in every country (so long as the conviction that righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is the reproach of any people, prevails) their character will be sacred and inviolable, and their persons protected from insults, outrage, and oppression. For their serviceableness and dignity will recommend these reputable members of the community to private confidence

fidence and friendship, and to universal notice, and public encouragement. And, under this security and countenance, the blessings of plenty and affluence, in the common course of things, will prove the effect and recompence of their honesty, diligence, and frugality.

But, however, it must be owned, for experience, and the particular exception of *Job* in the text is a proof, that men of probity and virtue are not always successful and fortunate in the world, and is a confirmation that even good men may, without any impeachment of their innocence, be involved in troubles and calamities, and therefore the outward circumstances and distress of the sufferers are no infallible decisions of their being greater sinners than others. And this is obvious in the instance of *Job*, who was sorely afflicted, and yet was evidently very innocent. This state of good men is agreeable to the representations of holy writ, and is confirmed by observation and history; for, it is well

known in a general depravity and inundation of corruption, virtue proves a snare, and exposes the righteous to persecution and violence. This is confirmed by the reigns of some of the Roman emperors, when it was dangerous to appear virtuous, and was exemplified in the persecutions of the primitive christians, and will be practised with the same iniquity in every degenerate age. For honest men, when iniquity abounds, will never submit to the base, however popular and fashionable vices of the times; and their inflexibility and integrity will raise them enemies, and parties will unite to deface, and prosecute conspicuous virtue.

But then, in this hard condition, and under the load of unjust oppression, the holy sufferers are neither discouraged nor despair. A sense of their integrity is their support and consolation; and a consciousness of their innocence, and the consideration of calamities, as the exercise and improvement of their virtue; and the certainty
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of an interest in the life and immortality, brought to light by the gospel, will enforce submission and resignation, as their obedience will be abundantly rewarded. And this persuasion will encourage the persecuted, in discharge of their duty, to despise the insults and insurrection of an *host of men*. For, having secured God's favour and approbation, they acquiesce in his wisdom and goodness, without murmur or complaint, under all distresses. And the confidence of an immortality opened, and assured to their faith will animate them to bear all hardships with a becoming patience; this glorious prospect will communicate in all their troubles, comfort; and the joyful expectation and assurance will inspire a cheerfulness and pleasure, in overcoming temptations, and enliven the hopes of happiness at the hour of death; and so confirm a perseverance in well doing to the end; forasmuch as this obedience will infallibly secure glory, honour and immortality.

P R E A C H E D

At Ogborn, St. Andrew, November 8, 1741.

At St. George, March 29, 1742.

Before Lord and Lady Ailesbury, at Tottenham, October 31, 1742.

At Serjeant's Inn, before Lord Chief Baron Parker, and Mr. Justice Foster, &c. April 23, 1749.

At St. Mary's, before the University, Feb. 19, 1758.

At Swindon, Wilts, May 4, 1769.

S E R M O N VIII.

2 CHRON. XIX. Ver. 7.

Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do righteousness: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

THE known depravity of human nature, and a too bad experience of the common-degeneracy of mankind in all ages, have abundantly proved the absolute necessity and requisite execution of laws, to the very being, as well as interest of society.

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And, if we trace the institution up to its first commencement, the most authentic accounts of history, declare its antiquity of a very early date. For we find in fact, as the world grew populous, it became vicious, and soon manifested a propensity and ripeness for violence and invasion. And therefore men, in order to check and prevent the dreadful calamities of lawless licentiousness and cruel oppression, formed themselves into communities for their mutual defence and protection.

This was certainly the reason and immediate occasion of all laws, the obvious design of which is the security of men's persons, rights and properties; and provision of this sort must evidently be calculated and proportioned to the different exigences and state of the world; and, consequently, fewer were required for the dispensation of justice at first. But, when people, in time, multiplied and grew numerous, and government improved by experience into a regular policy; then the dispensa-

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fers of justice for the dispatch of business were encreased, the offices regulated and reduced to a necessary subordination to higher powers, for the general advantage of all constitutions. And this subordination is founded on necessity, because the decision of a variety of cases, is apparently too great an employment for any single person. This is the reason and ground of Jethro's advice to *Moses* to provide subordinate rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. These were to judge the people at all seasons, and impowered to determine less matters; but the more difficult causes and matters of importance were to be brought before *Moses* to receive his final sentence. So, says *Jethro*, shall it be easier for thyself, and they will bear the burden with thee. And as it was excellent advice, the proposal, upon attention, had the approbation of *Moses*; and, in pursuance of this good advice, he appointed a magistracy entirely upon this plan. And some provision of this nature, tho' not

not, perhaps, of just the same form, must subsist in every nation, for the more easy, expeditious administration of justice. Accordingly, you know the ruling members of corporations and boroughs are vested with authority by *charter* to do justice, in ordinary cases; whereas, causes of more material consequence are reserved for the cognizance and decision of superior magistrates. But yet, tis certain, provisions of this kind, and with this reserve, as they are intended; so when well executed, become greatly useful and beneficial in promoting the interest and prosperity of a kingdom. The only question then is, how this desirable advantage can be best secured? and what is the most effectual principle to influence the magistrate, in the faithful discharge of his office? And try all the schemes that human fancy can conceive or devise, and you must, after all, resolve it into the *fear of God*, as the only firm assurance we can have, and may acquiesce in with safety and confidence

confidence. Wherefore, now, let the fear of the Lord, &c. These words evidently require.

I. An habitual fear of God, on the mind of every magistrate, as a qualification absolutely necessary to the due discharge of his duty. And even, where there is this *first* principle, they particularly enjoin

II. A careful, impartial administration of justice, take heed and do righteousness, as this only can derive credit and honour on your office, and promote the public good. And as nothing is so effectual a persuasive to purity of life, as the constant influence of a good example, this consideration will certainly determine every ruler for the good of the people. To a virtuous behaviour in his private life; with which reflection I shall conclude.

And first, every magistrate, whatever his rank and quality may be in a state, is yet properly and strictly God's minister. He may

may, indeed, and does often receive his commission immediately from men, and so acts by deputation. But then, this deputed authority, thus derived, is not vested absolutely and ultimately in him that gave it; because, all power or government is, in fact, the ordinance of God. Sovereigns, therefore, and monarchs, are only his vicerents, appointed for the preservation of the peace, order and happiness of mankind. And however they may sport with, abuse, or prostitute the godlike privilege of power, yet 'tis certain the grant itself, and all the claim and title, that the greatest potentates on earth have to it, is grounded and centered on a right application to the glory of God, and the service of men. For there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God: and rulers are declared ministers of God's institution for the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well. And, by him, kings reign, and princes decree justice, in like manner; the officers, who act in a subordinate

diaste capacity, are appointed with a subserviency to carry on and compleat the great end of all government, the *public good*, and are therefore properly to be considered as the *ordinance* of God, and so accountable to him for their administration and behaviour, in their respective offices. And, 'tis very remarkable to the present purpose, Jehoshaphat, who was himself a king, upon his appointment of judges, considered them in this point of view, for to engage his new made judges to a more conscientious execution of justice. This is his immediate charge: Take heed what you do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. And how, indeed, can we expect impartiality from any magistrates, but such as act under an awful sense, and full conviction of receiving their commission from God.

For a firm persuasion in the mind of the magistrate, that he is God's representative, will impress a right sense of his true character, and inspire him with an inflexible
resolution

resolution and integrity not to be corrupted. He will be determined to imitate the Lord his God, in the whole administration of his office; and therefore resolve to be always free as from all iniquity, so from all partiality. This consideration, and this only, will raise him above all influence; divest him of party and prejudice; distinguish him for a strict attention to the real merits of every cause; and make him what it is necessary he, and all who are concerned in the decision of justice, should be perfectly impartial judges.

But, suppose a magistrate void and regardless of the fear of God, and what can you expect from his administration? Nothing regular, nothing certain. There is abundant Reason to dread a general, a gross irregularity, and whatever little good he may happen to do in the course of his office will be imputed to meer chance, and not to any good intention. Thus you may observe, he will forfeit all title to merit
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and esteem, for want of a right principle.

Our Saviour himself has given us an affecting character of an irreligious judge, which amply confirms this representation. The unjust judge, in *St. Luke*, did, 'tis true, avenge the poor widow, and why? Was it from a sense of the justice of her cause? from a regard to religion, honour, or conscience? From none of these, but for his own ease and quiet, and to prevent the trouble of a constant importunity. And how natural is the conclusion, that every magistrate destitute of the *fear of God* will act upon no settled principle, but run through his office as the impulse of humour and passion, or the influence of partiality and interest direct him?—And therefore you cannot but see how immediately necessary the *fear of God* is to the doing of your duty? For, consider yourselves as acting in God's stead, and accountable to him for mismanagement and misconduct. And what is the immediate effect, and cer-
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tain consequence, of so awful a consideration? Undoubtedly, an impartial execution of *justice*. For you will then never, who are the guardians of justice, betray a trust confided to your care and fidelity, and must, consequently, resolve to be under no sort of influence. Justice is your immediate, your proper, and your only province. Consider yourselves as under a strict obligation for the discharge of this your more particular duty; and then, you will endeavour to have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man: for no distinction of party, no relation of blood, no union of affinity, nor attachment of friendship, will ever prevail with you to connive at, or avert the sentence of justice.

And I must observe further, how particularly useful and necessary a constant sense of God is always to the magistrate; as 'tis an effectual restraint and certain preservative from *pride*, a sin that too easily besets, and is too often predominant in stations of power

power and eminence. For, if men are weak and vain enough not to attend to their proper character, but dwell on their *dignity*, as an argument of *capacity* and *merit*; *pride* will soon swell the heart, and intoxicate the head with an imaginary conceit; and then, prompt them to exercise a tyrannical and absolute sway. But when the mind is seasoned with a thorough sense of *religion*, the man, truly sensible of the author of his *dignity*, will arrogate no vain praise to himself, but generously ascribe his exaltation to God, and say, His right hand raised him to honour, his arm, and the light of his countenance, because he had a favour unto him. And this sense of his obligation will prompt him to impute the success of his administration, not purely to his own prudence and counsel, but to the assisting grace of the Almighty, in whose governance are the hearts of all rulers; and who turneth and disposeth of them as it seemeth best to his godly wisdom. The *fear of God* will never suffer him to abuse

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and prostitute his influence and authority to the base service and shameful gratification of his lusts, but will urge him to employ, and exert it to his Lord's honour and service. So useful, so extremely necessary is an habitual fear of God on the mind of the magistrate. And wherever there is this fixt principle, it will appear as I observed,

In a careful and impartial administration of justice, he will take heed and do righteousness; as this care and diligence can only bring the magistrate honour and credit, and promote the public good.

A truly religious magistrate, as he will be sure to act under the influence and sense of religion, so he will consider himself under a strict obligation to take heed; for, without care and precaution, 'tis impossible to *do righteousness* with a becoming impartiality and integrity. A thorough knowledge of every fact must evidently be previous to a just determination; and this will plainly require patient hearing, an examination

nation of all circumstances, a close attention to particulars, and, for fear of a wrong judgment, a review, perhaps, of the evidence. This is obviously requisite in the most plain and easy cases; for where different parties are concerned, tis but common justice to hear both sides, and allow the respective pleas their full and proper weight: a magistrate, who thinks this too much trouble, and is unwilling to be at this necessary pains; tis certain, is ill qualified for the seat of justice; for, without this diligence and application, how is it conceivable, he can ever discharge his important trust? I have hitherto supposed the easiest part *of your office*, that the parties have acted with general candour at least; though not without a suspicion of what you must expect some share of *partiality*. And therefore, even here it is your incumbent duty, to consider this common and natural prejudice; and consequently you are obliged to take heed, to sift the matter, to observe where the weight of evidence pre-

vails, and where the partial insinuations of self, lurk in disguise. This is a necessary distinction to be made, if you would be thought, and would ever minister true judgment to the people.

But consider, you have to deal, generally with the lowest of the people, and observe, what I apprehend you frequently find to be fact. That there is often much perplexity and confusion in their evidence, in some through ignorance; in others, through design. In these cases, therefore, an exact and minute enquiry is perfectly necessary; for, it is certain, no just sentence can be pronounced, till these obstacles are removed; that is, till the case is made clear, and fully understood. If then you would know the *truth*, you must resolve to search the matter. An accurate examination will enable you to discover where real ignorance has occasioned obscurity and confusion, and where the artifice and craft of knavery has wilfully involved matters in evasive dissimulation and artful intricacy.

intricacy. This will prove a certain clue to assist and direct you in all the difficulties, the windings, the labyrinths, incident to the administration of justice; and is the only expedient to prevent imposition, and expose fraud and knavery. And who does not see how extremely seasonable, and requisite a qualification, a strict caution is in every magistrate in order to his doing righteousness? And, it is hence obvious, he had need be endued with judgment, with prudence, with patience, and with penetration; for these qualities are essential to a thorough canvassing and adjusting of litigated points, under the conduct of an exact vigilance and acute discernment.

Add to this, the variety of temptations that the magistrate is exposed to, in the course of his office, and the necessity of the injunction, to *take heed*, will appear with a still stronger obligation. For magistracy is by no means to be regarded as a station of eminence and elevation only, but you

must be sure to remember always, what it is in *fact*, a state of *trial*, and a test of your integrity. And therefore, you are to consider honor and duty, as necessarily and inseparably connected, and your dignity as incumbered with temptation. This consideration will have a useful effect; it will mortify vanity, and the bloated conceit of power; and, moreover, influence you to *take heed* what you do, for you must expect to have your integrity attacked in every passion of your nature, your fear stormed by insolence and menace, your favour courted by insinuation and flattery, so that it will require a firm resolution, and the utmost care, to pass a conscientious sentence; for, if passion or prejudice are suffered to prevail, the magistrate will be too apt to divert the stream of *justice*, and force it into a wrong channel; so necessary is an exact care to the just determination of all cases that are brought before him.

But your care and vigilance is of a yet larger extent; for, as magistrates you are
certainly

certainly bound to prevent *evils*, as well as redress grievances; and, therefore, the morals of the people fall under your observation, and deserve your serious attention. And here I cannot help intimating, that there are two foul vices, that the populace are generally much addicted to; vices of a certain pernicious tendency; vices often fatal and destructive to communities; and, therefore, vices well worth your special notice; and these are *lewdness* and *intemperance*. Recollect only the constant confessions of malefactors and criminals at the gallows, if you want proof for your full conviction. These vices generally go hand in hand, and unite in men's destruction. You may, with a little reflection, observe the whole progress of these vices: *intemperance* is an incitement and inlet to *lewdness*, and *lewdness* is forced in its turn to fly to *intemperance*. And what dreadful evils are we not to expect from this corrupt source? What but theft, robberies, cruelties, murders? What a frightful image of horror
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and desolation does the prospect of these *twin* vices shock us with? How seasonable, therefore, is it for the magistrate to interpose, and exert his authority, to punish these notorious disorders, and nip the evil in the bud? Consider that confinement, and a seasonable correction, may be of great service to reclaim the vicious; and as it has this use, it is an act of *charity* as well as justice. I am, however, by no means, for treating all offenders with equal rigour: this severity would often prove a manifest injury, and wherever it may consistently be done, *justice* should be tempered with *humanity*. For there is certainly a great difference between delinquents, who have unhappily been seduced by inexperience, and the downright worthless profligate. The raw novice, is, methinks, entitled to compassion, and even some indulgence, when joined with seasonable cautions and good advice from a magistrate, may make a deeper impresson, and have a better effect than the most sublime precepts

precepts delivered from the pulpit. And when you make this reflection, I will hope the cause, the service, and interests of religion and virtue, will engage you to make the application, wherever it is likely to be attended with success.

And I must beg leave to remind you, that 'tis your duty never to spare the *idle*, the loose, the dissolute wretch, — you may perhaps be induced to show favour from a mistaken sense of compassion; but, be assured, the World will pronounce it, either *weakness*, *pufillanimity*, or indolence, in all flagrant cases, and recollect you are the guardians of the public, and that the community cries for vengeance, on all such locusts. Impunity is an encouragement to iniquity and villainy. Let them know you will never suffer them to live on the spoil; and make them feel all attempts of gaining a livelihood, by easier than honest methods, shall only subject them to harder labour, and deserved punishment. Much good, we are assured, has been done in the nation this way,

way, and many reduced to a just sense of their interest, and duty; many more we have sad experience, want to have this seasonable kindness done them. And you must know the importance, both to them, and yourselves, of checking the growth of wickedness, before it is too late. If you hope for the reputation and honour of good magistrates, and you are false to God and man, if you neglect it, remember shame, disgrace and contempt, are the certain portion of a bad magistrate; and an indolent one, is not a mere *cypber*, but a libel on good laws. Let therefore, vigilance, zeal, and activity, distinguish the administration of your office. This diligence, will procure you veneration and reverence; and if you are willing to adorn your character with a lustre, and grace, consider the persuasive and effectual influence of a good example. And this will enforce the necessity and expedience of what is required from the magistrate, as his necessary duty, which is the

III.

III. Proposition; viz. a virtuous behaviour in his private life.

This conduct, in its full extent, certainly implies the practice of every social, and domestic virtue, but as there is a close connection between the private and public life of the magistrate, I shall only specify those virtues, which especially illustrate magistracy: And need I mention the great and singular advantage of the magistrate's constant attendance on the service of the *church*, I have proved an awful sense of religion absolutely necessary to the due discharge of his office. And, if he acts under this sense of religion, it will never suffer him to forget his duty to God, or neglect any opportunity of worshipping him, in prayer and supplications, with the Congregation. This he will consider, when he thinks it a privilege of distinction, for he never can appear with more honour and glory, than when he humbles himself before God. And, when you reflect that the common people live chiefly, if not wholly,
by

by *precedent*; and it is well known, they are guided more by example, than precept; it is almost superfluous, to remind you of the necessity of frequenting the *church* constantly; for you cannot but be sensible, that a good example must greatly influence the populace, and so prove instrumental in the conversion of some, and the confirmation of others, in religion.

But as christian magistrates, it will be highly proper to insist on your being graced with christian virtue: And in the first place, to be cloathed with humility. A virtue perfectly necessary to *all* who bear office; and whose worth is, perhaps enhanced, because, a scarce one. I speak of the true genuine humility, not the base, the counterfeit, which is but too often put on, to hide the deformity and odious imputation of *pride*; the common attendant of promotion, and advancement. I speak of that *humility*, which displays its amiableness, in a frankness, and candour of behaviour. This virtue will always prove an ornament,

namement, and is therefore a requisite quality in every magistrate; for it will dispose him to be easy of access, ready to hear, and glad to redress grievances, and incline him to favour and encourage modest merit, and check, and awe assuming insolence.—

To humility, the magistrate should take care to add its sister virtue *patience*; a virtue of the utmost importance to his executing justice with a strict impartiality. And it is, I think, obvious how this effect will generally be obtained, by determining him to a thorough examination of every case. Whereas, austerity, and precipitation must unavoidably run over, and neglect many circumstances, which, if attended to, and observed, would contribute greatly to the clearing up, and illustrating matters. And it has already been remarked how necessary *patience* is to the adjusting the differences and litigations of the vulgar, upon account of their evidence, which is almost always attended with perplexity and confusion either from ignorance and stupidity, or
from

from iniquity and knavery. And, therefore, as this is so obvious, it is doubtless unnecessary to enlarge on these virtues more particularly.

But I must beg leave to specify one virtue more, as of the first importance to the magistrate, which is, *temperance*. For, what hope can there be of good administration, when the magistrate himself, who by his office, is to punish, should be guilty of vice? How insensibly will the blush cover that man's face, who in passing sentence upon another, condemns his own crime in that very person. There is too much reason to suspect, he will be inclined to connive at, and overlook all such crimes, and from self-partiality let such offenders generally escape.

By *temperance*, I not only mean that virtue, as opposed to any particular excess, but I extend it to that reigning vice *luxury*. Reigning indeed, for the infection has corrupted almost all orders, and degrees of men. And, by *luxury*, understand a false

false predominant taste for vanity, and extravagance ; whether it appears in superfluity of *dress, equipage*, or in epicurism, or all, as to quantity and quality. 'Tis, I am satisfied, in the power of the legislature to prevent, in some degree, the increase of either,—but influence of example may have a better effect. For, would not inferiors generally be ashamed to affect what they observe their superiors neglect, and despise ? Pride and imitation introduce and support this pernicious vice. The good example therefore, of superiors would tend considerably to a speedy reduction of this monster vice, and hinder its fatal consequences. A little knowledge of history and observation will satisfy us, that wherever luxury prevails, it never fails to destroy the most flourishing empires and kingdoms. We have the united suffrage of all ages and nations to confirm this sad truth ; and it was remarkably verified in the ruin
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and fall of *the four great empires**. Voluptuousness and effeminacy, the inseparable attendants of luxury, encouraged the invasion of foreign enemies, and exposed them to worse at home, by prostituting their honour. For, to support their extravagance, they could submit to corruption, and for the maintenance of *luxury*, forfeited their *liberty*. This effect it is known to have had——and always will have in every nation.——And therefore, the love of our country, when the danger is imminent, should provoke our just abhorrence of this vice,——inspire us with zeal to suppress it, and quicken our application to avert the impending ruin. The greater our superiority, the better able we shall be to effect it; and, consequently, the heavier charge will be against us, if we neglect it through want of courage, or the fear of incurring the imputation of *singularity*. And the magistrate,
as

* The Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman,

as the guardian of the public weal should consider. He owes his country this service, and therefore, let him try the influence of his example, and the success of it will secure himself and those around him, in the possession and enjoyment of *liberty*, and transmit the invaluable blessing to posterity.

Let superiors then, in all times and places, who are the great example and direction to the world, exert themselves each in their respective stations, and apply the power God has intrusted them with to the perfection and support of *law* and *right*; then may we confidently expect the blessing of *peace*, and a perpetuity of happiness on the earth.

And let magistrates in particular, remember, that *he*, that ruleth over *men*, must be *just*, ruling in the *fear* of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth; even a morning without clouds. He shall judge the people according unto right, and defend the

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poor

poor, and punish the wrong doer. In this time shall the righteous flourish; yea, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth. And God grant that all rulers may endeavour by a faithful administration of justice, to procure us the inestimable blessings of peace for our present comfort, and the attainment of future glory--through the mercies of Christ Jesus.——

Preached before the Mayor, upon the admission into the office at Marlborough, September 22, 1742, and 26, 1744.

S E R M O N IX.

GAL. Chap. VI. Ver. 2.

*Bear ye one another's burthens, and so fulfil
the law of Christ.*

THIS precept of the Apostle comprehends the whole duty of *charity*, in all its several offices, and relations. If it were not so, he would not have stiled this instance of our obedience a fulfilling the law of Christ, which we are sure from the whole tenor of the gospel, cannot be entirely fulfilled without it.

'Tis then only we fulfil that royal law, which requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, when we are ready to give as well as to forgive; to relieve the wants, as well as to cover the failings of our brother, to afford him all that comfort and support in his necessity, which ~~we ourselves~~ could reasonably wish or desire, under the same circumstances; and in a word, to help and assist him, to the utmost of our ability, and bear a part of the burthens he labours under, of whatsoever sort they be; I shall therefore in the

First place, shew what these burthens are, which as men, we are all subject to; and wherein, as fellow Christians, we are obliged to be helpful to one another—

And, in the second place, consider how the influence of our obedience to the law of Christ, which we are sure from

How by so doing, we may be said to fulfil the law of Christ.

First

First then, for those burthens of other men, which require and call for our assistance, the chief and heaviest of which are their sins and transgressions. This is indeed the most severe, and afflicting load, that any person can groan under; and good reason had David to complain when racked with the conscious remembrance of his *guilt*, yet his iniquities were like a sore burthen, too heavy for him to bear. Our sins, are the worst misfortunes that can befall us; nor is any one so deeply plunged in misery; no one is so very a wretch, or so truly an object of compassion, as an insensible, and obdurate sinner. And the rescuing any one from that *load of iniquity*, and gall of bitterness, is the friendliest, the noblest, the most beneficial instance of *Christian charity*.

But how can a man in this sense be said to bear the burthen of another? Can one man expiate and atone for another's crimes? Can he redeem his brother's soul or make agreement to God for him? Can

he, by charging himself with any proportion of his *guilt*, render him less criminal, and take off the insupportable weight of his iniquity? This is an office beyond the reach of the most extensive charity, and not to be undertook by any meer man; who, be he never so upright, will have faults enough of his own to answer for, and be far from needing any additional blame to heighten and inflame his charge. The obligation of religion is personal, and not to be transferred from one to another; nor can there be any such thing as a communication of *merit* or *demerit* between the members of Christ's church; we must all *stand* or *fall* by our own actions; and as it follows a verse or two after the text, every man, in this respect, shall bear his own burthen.

But though we cannot bear the *offences*, we may bear with the offenders; we may pass by with a Christian candour and forbearance their small, and pardonable transgressions; or be they never so flagrant, and enormous,

enormous, never so heinously aggravated, we may yet endeavour to restore them in the spirit of meekness, and to make them sensible of the folly, and danger of their sins: we may use such methods for their information, as may possess them with a due sense of their duty, which they never knew before, or had never well considered. And by exhortations, by counsels, by intreaties; or when they are irreclaimable by any gentler ways, by punishment, and coercion——so far as we have authority to inflict it, we may reduce them from their extravagance to serious and sober thinking; put a stop to the growth of their impiety, and by converting them from the error of their ways, save their souls from death, and cover a multitude of sins.

This charity to the souls of men, and labouring with an affectionate concern to save them from ruin, has most of the spirit of *Christianity* in it, and makes us, of all others, most nearly resemble the pattern of our Redeemer; whose whole time here

on earth was spent in performing offices of this nature. Nay, indeed, the poor and indigent condition in which He chose to appear in this world, left him no room to be liberal in any other way, unless when he was pleased to work a miracle to enable Him to do so. And the same charitable work may be performed by us, as it was by Him, with no other expence than the exercise of some patience, and the loss of a little time, which can never be so usefully spent, never so profitably lost.

But even with respect to *giving* and *receiving*, we may be certainly assured, that whatever we bestow by way of alms, will be so much the more acceptable, the more there is of this principle in us, that we design to honour God with our substance; who is never so truly honoured by it, as when it is employed in such a manner, and to such uses, as may most effectually promote the spiritual, and eternal welfare of his creatures.

I now

I now proceed to represent the *innocent* burthens that mankind are liable to bear; those calamities and disasters which are the inseparable attendants on frail humanity—such as the course of Providence will oblige every man to bear some share of; and the laws of Christianity should incline him further, to take more than his own, and with a willing generosity to submit to some inconveniencies, which were not immediately and necessarily allotted him,——— and wherein he perceives himself, is remarkably favoured, and his neighbour heavily over-charged. Now these may be reduced to the following particulars, as they affect our outward state and condition—our body, or our *mind*.

As to those evils which concern our outward state and condition, we are all sensible of,—we feel ourselves to be cloathed with frail and perishable bodies, whose continual waste and decay, requires as constant refreshments and supplies; and we perceive that even food and raiment,
which

which are necessary for our support and preservation, are not the gift of *nature*; but find ourselves obliged to eat our bread in the sweat of our brows, and to provide for our subsistence, by our own labour, and industry. We see the Great Dispenser of blessings has thought fit to distribute those worldly comforts, by very unequal lots; not but that he regards both *rich* and *poor* with the eye of a common parent, and resolves to make good in due time, that seeming inequality. In the mean time He gives them *both* an opportunity of serving Him, and conspiring in their respective circumstances and capacities, to glorify His name, the only true end of living here below; the one by a patient submission under his want and penury; — the other by a pious and charitable use of his abundance.

'Tis for this end God has made one man to differ from another; for this He has appointed some to stand in need of relief, and qualified others to afford it, that each might

might exert the virtues proper to the sphere wherrin, by the Divine appointment, he is placed. Whereas, if every one was made sufficient of himself; if no man had occasion for the assistance of any other, did he contain within himself such an abundance of worldly comforts, as he was secure would never fail him, nor oblige him to seek for any thing without himself, the brightest and most exalted graces that now adorn our minds, would then be wholly useless. The best and most convincing demonstrations we can give of our love to Christ, which we can never so acceptably demonstrate, as by extending our charitable aid to the distressed members of his body, would then be of no service to us, would be no proof or evidence of our sincerity, whilst our charity remained untried thro' the defects of suitable objects, on whom it might be exercised. So that in reality, a rich man, if he considers to what end his riches were given, and is disposed in his heart

heart as he ought to be, may as properly be said to need a poor man to give to, as a poor man to need the assistance and friendly contribution of the rich.

There is then, and it is very fit there should be a remarkable disproportion in the outward allotments that befall us, to the intent that God, who divideth to every man severally as he will, may put us to an open trial; that on the one hand, his goodness may shine forth, and his *mercy* triumph in rewarding the beneficence, and pious liberality of those who abound in wealth, as well as the cheerful submission to his pleasure in such as suffer need; or else on the other hand, his *justice* may be magnified in the exemplary punishment of those, who are miserably hard-hearted in one estate, or impatiently restless in the other. The bounty therefore of Providence is so far from being eclipsed; the Divine Wisdom, so little liable to exception in this particular, that all men are not
equally

equally rich, and powerful: that on the contrary, without such inequality, there would be no harmony at all in the course of things: and we may discern the visible marks of God's infinite and unerring prudence, in making us subservient to *one another*, as well as to himself.

For as we should be strongly tempted to withdraw our allegiance from Him, if He had made us independent of Himself; so had He made us independent of *one another*,——the mutual offices of love and friendship; in the performance of which consists the excellence and dignity of our nature would be extinguished. In such a state of things there would be no *givers*, because there would be no *receivers*; the merciful man could have no opportunity of exerting his bounty, when he, to whomsoever he would extend it, would be as amply provided as himself. And let any one consider what a comfortless state this life would be, if love and mercy, gratitude, and friendship——the sweetest of human

human *affs*, and which affect us with the most sensible pleasure, should be entirely banished.

But this, as I have observed, is far from being the case. As the world now stands, there is a large scope for doing good, and objects of commiseration more than enough, to exhaust the largest charity. But they would be less numerous, if men were truly and heartily convinced of the present joy and satisfaction that springs within the soul of a merciful man, when he has comforted and refreshed a miserable object, as well as the glorious reward with which his *charity* will infallibly be crowned hereafter.

Could but the *obdurate miser*, whose heart and soul are sunk into the earth, and buried with his money; who is obstinately deaf to all the cries of the distressed, who can behold a poor famishing wretch with unrelenting bowels; could he, I say, perceive but one glimpse of those never-fading riches, which the charitable person has treasured up in Heaven? How would he

he despise those in which he now places the sum of his *felicity*? How earnestly would he contend for the true riches, and provide him bags that wax not old? What friends would he make him with the Mammon of unrighteousness here, that he might be received into an eternal habitation, when this world, and all the glory of it shall pass away? How much more solid complacency would he find, in succouring the poor, and redeeming him from misery and ruin, than he ever did in thriving by his necessity, and in oppressing, and devouring him. We are under a great mistake, if we imagine we are so far masters of any thing we possess as to have no account to render of it. From this false notion of *property*, we are apt to look upon ourselves as discharged from all obligations to do good, any farther than as we are prompted to it by our natural propensity or inclination.

But, whatever the dictates of self-love may suggest to us, yet the gospel teaches

us a different lesson; where we are assured, that these worldly advantages are talents committed to our trust by the Sovereign Lord of the universe; that we are but the stewards and dispensers of them under Him, who will one day make a strict enquiry, how, and to what purposes we employed them. And our Saviour has warned us to prepare to answer at the Great Day, upon these heads of examination.—What hungry we fed, what naked we clothed; what other objects of compassion we relieved, that is, as far as our abilities extended; for so far it is reasonable that a man's lawful and necessary occasions should, in the first place, be considered. But then men must not judge every thing necessary, which *avarice* or *pride*, which *luxury*, or *wantonness* may require. He that will postpone the doing any friendly offices, till such unreasonable humours are satisfied, will never begin to do good, for those will never have done craving:

ving : and when this is made a feigned pretence only to cover our own *uncharitableness*, when we make very great allowances for our own *imaginary* wants, and very little for the *real* ones of others, 'tis too plain a sign, we are not touched with that compassionate feeling for the sufferings of our christian brethren, which our common nature and religion excite in us.

But here it may be asked, by what rule we should guide ourselves in the distribution of our alms, or how we shall be assured of employing them to the best advantage ? Let it therefore be noted, that although charity, in proportion to our substance, is a necessary duty, yet every one may extend his charity to such objects as most affect him. But it is to be hoped, for his own sake at least, he will take care to be beneficial in some way or other, and that he will not make his uncertainty where to bestow his *alms*, an excuse for bestowing none at all. Do all the good thou canst

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for

for thine own part, and trust Providence for the rest, which thou canst not do. Nay, if it should happen to be misapplied, this would reflect no dishonour on him who gave it with an honest intent; nor would it be any lessening of his *charity*.

Good-will and benevolence, pity and compassion are a debt we owe to all mankind. All that partake of the same nature with us, may lay claim to these common offices, though still a more peculiar regard is to be had of those to whom we have nearer engagements, and to whom we are united by closer ties: but especially we should endeavour so to employ our charity, as to make it most serviceable to the glory of God, and the good of mankind.

But, *secondly*, I come to consider the burthens we are obliged to bear for one another, which more immediately affect our *body*. This mortal part of us, as we all feel, is made of a very frail contexture,
subject

subject to be disordered by a thousand accidents; and tortured by violent diseases, and to pine away under an infirm constitution; and here it may be asked what one man can do for another, in such circumstances? Can I be sick and languish for my neighbour? Will my sickness add to his health,—or my weakness to his strength? Our experience tells us that this is impracticable. But however, we may be able to administer some comfort to our afflicted brother; we may pity him at least; and even pity is some relief to the miserable. But this is not all—for as the accidents that may befall our bodies are very numerous, so are the remedies by which these accidents may be repaired. These, the *great* and *rich* can procure for themselves, whenever it is their lot to be visited by such calamities.—But when *poverty* and *sickness* meet together, what must become of such unhappy wretches, if it were not for the timely relief of charitable chris-

tians, who in a very good sense may be said to bear the burthens of other men?

The *mind* also has its burthens or grievances, which want to be redressed; the worst of which is the reflection of a *guilty conscience*, which cannot be cured but by a solemn and sincere repentance, to which we should always be exhorting and admonishing one another. We should inform the ignorant, and instruct them in their duty,—for it is a deplorable thing to see the mind of man, which is capable of receiving noble impressions, lie wholly barren and unimproved: such a debasement of human nature every good man should take to heart, and endeavour to prevent, or rectify. And by

Being thus charitable, and bearing one anothers burthens. we shall fulfil the *law of Christ*.

For, love is indeed the fulfilling of the *law*, and the gospel too; it is the bond of perfectness, and the consummation of all that

that is *good* in us. He that has this principle fixed and rooted in him, will not fail so long as he is under the actual influence of it, in any point of duty towards his neighbour; he will not only refrain from any invasion of his just right, but be forward to lend him his assistance, and to do him all friendly offices; because all such abstinence from *ill*, and readiness to do *good*, with the several acts thence arising, are but subordinate branches of that general and comprehensive rule of loving our neighbours as ourselves. Love is the distinguishing mark of christianity, and that badge by which our Lord would have his disciples known; hereby, says He, shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another. To say that we are followers of the Holy Jesus, and yet retain no bowels of compassion for our brethren is the greatest absurdity that words can express, for an uncharitable christian implies a contradiction. Love is the noblest orna-

ment of our souls, it outshines the other *graces* that reside there, as the Apostle has assured us, it makes us most like God, the Author of our religion; if we have not this, whatever other natural or moral excellencies we abound in, we are nothing but sounding brass, and a tinkling *cymbal*.

The liveliest *faith*, the most vigorous *hope*, the most ardent *devotion*, will stand us in no stead, if they are not sanctified and perfected by that principle, in which the spirit of our religion consists. For though *charity itself* may cover a multitude of sins, yet no excess of any other virtue will cover the defect, or want of *that*.

Whoever, therefore, values himself upon the highest proficiency in such a scheme of Godliness, as has been exclusive of charity——though his other attainments may be very great, yet lacketh he *one thing*: let him go his way, sell what he has, and give to the poor, and so shall he have treasure in Heaven.

Which

Which that we may all lay up while we are here, and have the fruition of hereafter, God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

*Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, February
13, 1742;*

S E R M O N X.

2 SAMUEL, Chap. X. Ver. 12.

*Be of good courage, and let us play the men
for our people, and for the cities of our
God: and the Lord do that which seemeth
Him good.*

THIS is the seasonable advice of Joab
to the people of Israel, under a ha-
zardous prospect of an impending slavery,
and an apparently immediate ruin: for
the Ammonites with a large army of merce-
nary forces of the *Syrians*, and other
neighbouring

neighbouring nations, were upon the march to invade the Israelites. The apprehension of their general danger appears to have justly alarmed their fears, and thrown them into no small consternation; as was exceeding natural upon so *interesting* an occasion. *Joab* was undoubtedly sensible of the effect, and apprehensive of the certain consequences, if they resigned themselves up to the influence of these dreadful *apprehensions*. He seems to have thought their condition, as it certainly was extremely dangerous: and allow it to have been so, from a conviction of the manifest hazard; but we may observe, he did not therefore conclude their state perfectly desperate and forlorn. *For* in this particular distress, as all was not utterly lost, he recommends a vigorous defence, and a generous vindication of their people, and the cities of their God, as a noble and worthy contention. If success crowned their glorious enterprize, they would then be a
victorious,

victorious, and continue a free and happy people : if it miscarried, it would then be soon enough to submit to the unavoidable yoke of enslaving invaders. In the mean time, it certainly became them to shew good courage, and to act the part of brave men, by one gallant attempt to preserve their freedom and liberty from the encroachments of a formidable invasion. The event, however, they were to submit to the decision of an all-wise Providence, with a firm persuasion that he would do what was best. If they were careful to do all that was incumbent on them, they might then reasonably hope with an humble confidence for God's blessing, in a deliverance from their enemies ; and accordingly, we know, they obtained the victory, by the favour of Providence. Be of good courage, and let us play, &c. The advice was directed particularly by Joab to the Israelites, in the reign of king David, from an apprehension of a formidable invasion : but they may, I think, be applied to

to all cases and circumstances of like nature, in a common, and general danger. And, therefore, as we of this kingdom have but too much reason to dread such terrible calamities, from our present hazardous situation, I shall at this crisis, beg leave to recommend,

I. The seasonable advice of the text ; Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God ; from the propriety of so necessary and suitable a conduct. And, when we have done this part of our duty, it will evidently become us.

II. From the pertinent example of the text, to acquiesce in the will and determination of God's good providence ; with an humble hope of success from the encouragement, that this precedent affords, in adopting a vigorous pursuit of such adviseable and expedient measures.

And

And first, I am to recommend the practice of the beneficial advice, which the words naturally offer to our consideration and personal observance. And this I shall do in the order they lie in the text.

Be of good courage. True courage, as represented and described by *all* moral writers, is properly conversant in calamities, in perils and distress; and appears, and is distinguished by a *conspicuous* resolute, manly contempt of all unavoidable danger. It is, therefore, evidently a generous virtue, and the illustrious medium between the extremes of a culpable rashness, and an abject timorousness: and on this foot—the celebrated character of an hero is a great encomium, and an honourable distinction. This person is the patriot. His conduct is always regular and consistent throughout, and his fears regulated by the dictates, and reduced to the obedience, and direction of sound reason. He never with the giddy adventurer plunges into unnecessary evils, nor do unreasonable fears, magnified

magnified by the resistless power of a weak imagination, precipitate a speedy flight, or occasion an inglorious desertion, under a sense of imminent calamities. But, his mind is firmly fixed, and hardened against the approach of every evil. He is intrepid under danger. The apprehension of it is considered as a just alarm to the exercise of public valour. The time of trials and manifestation of a reputable courage. The character then, the proper character, of this great and becoming virtue, is, thro' intrepidity, in the evil days of trouble. And whenever this becomes a common case, national dangers are an unexceptionable call and summons to every friend of his country to cloath himself with courage, when it demands this first service of every respective member of a kingdom. Accordingly, we may observe that Joab made it his first, and most necessary care to dissipate the terrors of the people of Israel, and then to rouse, and awaken them, to be of good courage.

And

And certainly, as our present circumstances bear but too near a resemblance, from a just sense of an invasion by our professed enemies ; it is absolutely necessary to exert a noble zeal and one common courage on this occasion. For, when our hearts glow, and are fired with the love of our KING and COUNTRY, FELLOW CITIZENS and FELLOW SUBJECTS, will, doubtless catch the generous flame ; and this duty improved——will kindle a general resolution and intrepidity, to be inflamed with good courage, in our country's cause. For this cannot but contribute unspeakably to disappoint and frustrate the schemes of those who have planned, and would be glad to effect our ruin. And it will afford a public testimony that we are not that divided disaffected, nor indeed deluded people we have been falsely represented : but that we still have, and I trust always shall have, the *public spirit* to resent and oppose all invasion of our religion, liberty, and government.

And

And the associations already formed in several parts of the kingdom, and now forming in others, to the honour and glory of this nation, are a demonstration that we neither are, nor indeed can be wanting in our own defence, nor in resenting such open indignities; nor in a zealous concurrence to chastize the insolence of rebels and invaders. This good courage will very probably intimidate our enemies, and may oblige them to desist from a fruitless and hardy enterprize. And I am willing to believe it will scarce fail of uniting all our friends in the strict bond of unanimity and concord. For the principle of self preservation cannot but naturally concur to enliven and confirm this *good courage*, and influence it to suitable actions, when so peculiarly requisite.

But this *good courage* raised to this honourable and heroic pitch, will animate us to improve it into its just perfection—and apply it to its due and proper use, by determining us to *play the men* for our *people*.

This

This was the visible intention of the advice recommended in this case, specified by the text, and it is remarkable that it succeeded by fully answering the reasonable expectations upon which it was delivered. For the Israelites saw clearly, and were persuaded it was their general interest to unite in their own defence on that critical occasion, and therefore, resolved without hesitation, or loss of time, *to play the men*. And does it not become us to act with the same common spirit in the like dangerous circumstances? We are disturbed with an insurrection at home in favour of a *Pretender*;—and this we know is encouraged by our old and naturally inveterate enemy *France*, in conjunction with *Spanish* and *Popish* Biggotry. And they have to provoke our indignation, added insolence to their enmity, by threatening us with an *invasion*. This certainly is an alarm to awake and provide for safety, as it is an intended attack upon *all* that is, and can be justly valuable to us. For it is not a de-

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bate at present whether we ought to vindicate and redress our grievances in point of trade and commerce---which I believe you will think an object well worth our notice and care. But our natural and civil rights are indeed the *great*, and important concern; for, your fortunes, liberties, and lives are at stake.

And, unless you are generously resolved to stand up in your necessary defence with heart and hand---all these will be unavoidably exposed to the rapine and plunder, the violence and outrage,---the lust, cruelty, and slaughter, and lawless will of merciless and desperate rebels. In this perilous situation, it is certainly our peculiar interest, as well as indispensable duty, to *play the men* for our *people*, and thereby for ourselves. Every honest heart, at such a crisis, must beat in its country's cause. An old Roman, I am sure, and every good Pagan, I believe, would consider this outrageous violence as a particular and personal affront,---and resent it as a gross indignity,

dignity, and consequently would concur with a generous zeal to punish so notorious and national an insult. And no christian; and free-born Englishman can ever consistently be wanting in so seasonable a service to the calls of his country. For, who of us that has any spirit, can brook the thought of being cramped with fetters of a French and Spanish slavery, or loaded with the *galling* yoke of a *foreign* Invader; and Pretender? None, I am persuaded—no true Englishman ever can; but every one of us will be fired with a just indignation to *play the men* for our people. And to do this we have no occasion.—*All of us* to take up arms in defence of our country, without an evident necessity. And it is greatly to be hoped things will never come to this extremity. But we ought certainly to applaud and encourage *all* who are heartily disposed to enter into so *worthy*, and reputable a service: and we shall need little importunity to concur in increasing the number of those honourable associations

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which

which are calculated to defeat and defy the attempts of our implacable enemies. For, these must in the very nature of things, tend to kill and extinguish all the dangerous and lurking seeds of treason and rebellion, and thereby prevent every instruction—and arm us effectually to quell whatever may happen of this nature. Suffer me then to exhort you to be of *good courage*, and let us *all play* the men for *our people*. And I am inclined to believe you will still be more ready to engage in this glorious service, and pursue the suitable conduct recommended in the text, when you consider that it is not only for our *people* but also for the *cities of our God*, that we are to act up to the character and dignity of men. And therefore it cannot be thought improper, as it is by no means unreasonable to repeat and apply this pertinent advice—Be of *good courage*—and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God.

By

By the *cities of their God*, I apprehend was meant the Israelites being considered as a peculiar, and favourite nation, then in covenant with God, and who were above all the rest of the world honourably distinguished by the profession and practice of the only true religion,—at that time in its greatest purity. For while they of *all* the people of the earth were the worshippers of the one true God—their neighbours were not only tainted with the general infection of *Gentile worship*, but bewildered in slavish superstition—and sunk in the gross corruptions of a prevalent idolatry. It therefore behoved them, as a chosen generation, a royal priest-hood, and an holy nation, to *play the men* for the *cities of their God*. This was a privilege they had great reason to value and esteem; and they would be naturally jealous of every attempt to disparage it—but the indignity of an invasion to spoil them in its consequences of their peculiar glory; their religion could

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scarce

scare fail of provoking a general and unanimous resentment. Their zeal would raise a public spirit—kindle an holy indignation, give common vigour and personal activity to defend and preserve a national religion from the violence of confederate invaders. If they could ever, they would then more particularly resolve to *play the men* for the *cities of their God*.

And it certainly becomes us, if we have a just sense of the great blessing of *Christianity* in its primitive simplicity and perfection, to be determined to do what they did on that occasion, in our own important case at this juncture. For our doctrines are the pure doctrines of *Jesus Christ* and His Apostles, drawn from the best and only genuine authority, the *scriptures*. The infallible word of God, which is the measure and rule of our actions, and practice. We therefore, as true Christians, and good Protestants, can never consent to have this *word of God* made of none effect, by the traditions of the *Church of Rome*.
We,

We, as true Christians and good Protestants, can never, with the most extensive charity, believe in scriptural doctrines as infallible authority, without a single proof from scripture; for contradictions to the first dictates of common sense and reason are the doctrine of transubstantiation—the invocation of Saints, Angels, and the Virgin Mary, in opposition to the one Mediator *Jesus Christ*; the superstitious and idolatrous worship of relicks, *images*, pictures. We, as true Christians, and good Protestants, can never allow the addition of sacraments never appointed by *Christ*, but the devices and inventions of corrupt men in the dark and ignorant ages of the church, indisputably contrary to the whole tenour and current of scripture. Nor can we, as true Christians, and good Protestants, admit unauthorized indulgences, dispensations of allegiance, pardons for sin,—and many other immoral practices contrary to sound doctrine. A sense of these corruptions in the Christian church occasioned

our Reformation, because we could not with a good conscience continue in the communion of the church *of Rome*, and thought ourselves obliged to believe and conform to the Christian religion, in its first, and Apostolical purity. The sense of this necessity distinguished the Christian zeal of our first reformers, to contend earnestly for our holy faith, once delivered to the Saints. And the same persuasion should doubtless engage our concern to preserve this faith pure. And the apprehension of losing this valuable blessing from a rebellion and invasion, should unite our hearts, and join our hands, as reformed Protestants in general, and as true church-men in particular, in an hearty concurrence to *play the men for the cities of our God*. For it is well known from experience they have never left us when in possession of power, the public profession and practice of the reformed religion. And the principles and spirit of that church, leave us no room to believe they ever

ever will, when they can indeed prevent it. The defence of our holy religion, is then a general call to this necessary duty; and we can none of us be wanting in a generous zeal and ardor to serve so great and so good a cause. And therefore, upon this reasonable presumption of your inclination and purpose to engage in the discharge of this necessary duty, I shall now enforce briefly,

II. The wise conduct the example in the text recommends to our practice in our present danger. When we have gloriously resolved to do whatever becomes us as men and patriots, as Christians and Protestants, for our *people*, but more especially for the cities of *our God*: we must after all entirely submit to the good-will of Providence, and say on this critical occasion,——The Lord do what seemeth Him good.

And it is certainly our interest and wisdom to acquiesce in the equal dispensations of an all-powerful, all-wise, and infinitely beneficent

beneficent God. Where the power is uncontrouled, the dominion is, and must be universal. And accordingly we know His kingdom ruleth over *all*; and are moreover assured His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and the dominion of it endureth from generation to generation. And this is an unexceptionable evidence for all the earth to fear the Lord, and for all the inhabitants of the world to stand in awe of Him. And the consideration of infinite power under the conduct of a merciful Providence, is a sufficient reason for princes never to trust wholly in man, and make flesh their arm : for there is no king saved by the multitude of an host. And this will receive a fuller confirmation, when we observe God's is not an arbitrary, but a righteous and good government. And we may therefore conclude with a reasonable confidence in the Lord, when He has pronounced *all* that put their trust in Him *blessed*. For the administration of the world is regulated by the most perfect wisdom,

dom, supported by Almighty power, and conducted in its certain influence by infinite goodness. And, as we know nations are punished in this world, as public bodies—for national sins;—let us only be careful to do what we ought, and reform what is amiss, and we may then reasonably hope that God will never give us over to our oppressors. For we believe the Judge of all the world will do what is right. And a sense of this has taught all good men in the several ages of the world, the piety of an entire resignation: and the wisdom of a perfect acquiescence in the unquestionable determination of the righteous Governor of the universe, in the casual occurrences of private and common life. This you know was particularly verified in the pious resignation of good old Eli, and the dutiful submission of patient and holy Job.

And you may observe upon this occasion, that this piety and wisdom is as pertinently seasonable in national emergencies; for it is remarkably exemplified by a general application

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And you may observe upon this occasion, that this piety and wisdom is as pertinently seasonable in national emergencies; for it is remarkably exemplified by a general application

application of the text; Be of good courage and let *us play* the men for *our people*, and for the *cities* of our God. And the Lord do what seemeth Him good. And therefore as we of this kingdom have often had signal and miraculous deliverances, and have frequently experienced the providential preservation of our civil and religious rights: it is certainly very fit, and our bounden duty to confide in His good providence. For if we make God our refuge and strength, who is a very present help in trouble, we shall then have no occasion to fear, because blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His inheritance.

If it is our happiness to have the Almighty for our protector, He will bring the counsel of our enemies to nought,—and make the devices of a rebellious people of none effect. He can still the tumult and madness of our invaders, and turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom and allegiance of the just. And,
because

because the king putteth his trust in the Lord, we believe that under the mercy of the Most Highest he shall not miscarry. For when Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not denied him the request of his lips, then the king will rejoice in thy strength O Lord: exceeding glad will he be of Thy salvation. And we, his faithful subjects will triumph in the name of the Lord our God. Save therefore, Lord, and hear us O King of Heaven when we call upon Thee! O, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end—but establish Thou the just. Let all our enemies be counfounded and fore vexed; and they shall, by Thy blessing upon our arms, be turned back and put to shame suddenly. With this humble and patient confidence our soul still waiteth for the Lord. For He is our help, and our shield. And upon the Almighty's giving us success, our heart shall rejoice in Him; because we have hoped in His holy name. Let therefore Thy merciful kindness, O Lord,
be

be upon us; like as we do put our trust in
Thee. And we with all humility crave of
Thee, O God, this great blessing, in the
name and through the alone mediation of
Thy appointed Intercessor Jesus Christ,
Thine only begotten Son, our Lord and
Saviour.—AMEN.

24 OCT 62

F I N I S.

PREACHED

*At St. George's, Southwark, and St. Mary
Woolnorth, October 13, 1745.*

At Christ Church, Surry, Oct. 20, 1745.

At St. Dunstan's in the West, Oct. 24, 1745.

*At St. Mary's, Marlborough, November
17, 1745.*

At St. Paul's, London, Nov. 10, 1745.

At St. Mary's, Oxford, Nov. 24, 1745.

*At St. George's, Queen Square, March
6, 1746.*

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PREACHED

At St. George's, Southwark, and St. Mary's
Westminster, October 13, 1745.
At Christ Church, Savoy, Oct. 20, 1745.
At St. Dunstons in the West, Oct. 24, 1745.
At St. Mary's, Minster, November
1745.
At St. Paul's, London, Nov. 10,
1745.
At St. Mary's, Oxford, Nov. 14,
1745.
At St. George's, Square, March
1746.

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